

Heros of Asgard

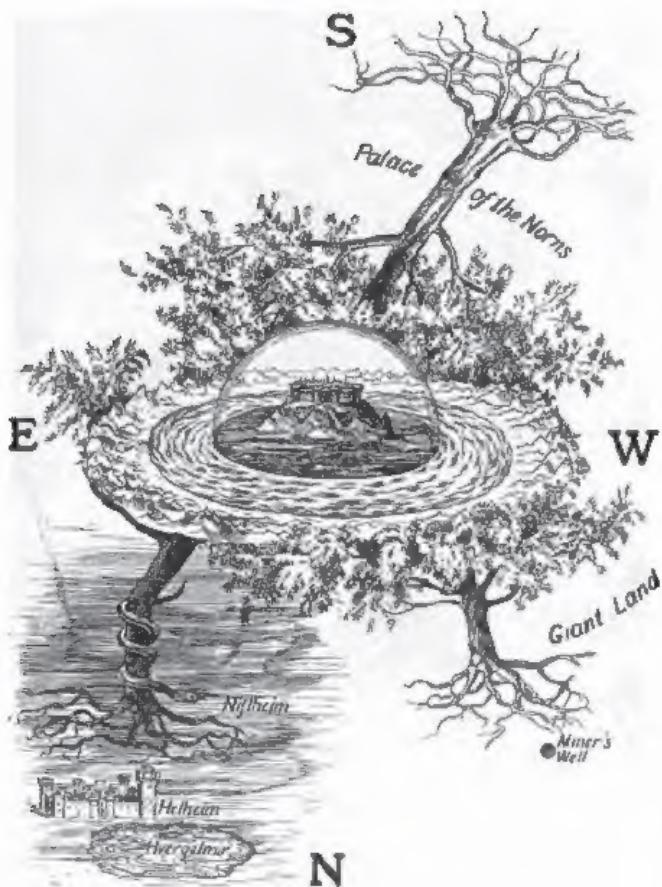


A. & E. Keary

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BOOKS





SKETCH SHOWING WORLD ASH AND ITS THREE ROOTS,
ASGARD CITY AND BIFROST.

The Heroes of Asgard

Tales from Scandinavian Mythology

By
A. and E. Keary

Adapted for the Use of Schools, with New Introduction

Glossaries, etc., by

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INTRODUCTION.

BY M. R. EARLE.

THERE is a collection of enchanting old stories in verse, written in the old Icelandic language, called the "Edda." These stories are so old that they are often very long-winded and complicated. So from time to time grown-up people have tried to pick out some of the most exciting and tell them in simple English for children to read and enjoy.

Your fathers and mothers had a book of such stories in their childhood called after the original book "Tales from the Edda." They never tired of reading it, for it was full of the thrilling adventures of dauntless heroes and of their fights with giants and monsters.

The "Heroes of Asgard" is another book about the same heroes and the same adventures chosen out of the Edda for you, to show you what a delightful collection of stories it is. When you are grown up, perhaps you will learn Icelandic, or Old Norse as it is sometimes called, so that you may read the other stories for yourselves in the original Edda. Anyhow you can read a complete translation and learn more of Odin and Thor and the other heroes of Asgard if you like.

One reason why the Edda stories are so long and hard to understand is that they were not at once written down in books as stories are now-a-days. For the Northmen

had no knowledge of books or writing when these sagas and songs were first sung up and down the countryside in their old homes of Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Men who wished to learn the old tales listened eagerly to the bards, or scalds as the Northmen called them, when they sang of the old heroes and gods in the halls of the great nobles and earls. And we may fancy how delighted the children would be, when their fathers told them these enchanting stories over again by the fireside in the long dark days of the northern winter.

But of course no one could remember word for word all the minstrels sang, and when they forgot any part of a story, men would invent some new romance to take its place. So the old songs were handed down by word of mouth from father to son, for hundreds of years growing and changing every time they were retold.

The songs grew too in another way—a way that I think you will quite be able to imagine. For you know that no two persons can ever tell the same tale exactly alike. So it was with the bards of the Northmen; first one scald and then another would make little changes in the songs they sang, and even invent new stories about the old heroes to enliven their tales and make them more exciting.

Thus it came about that countless additions and variations crept into the stories, so that no one knew how to distinguish the old tale from the legends that had grown out of it, and of course such long-winded stories grew harder and harder to remember. But at last poets arose amongst the Northmen who unravelled these tangled tales, and shaped the rather confused and artless songs into beautiful words and musical verse which men could keep in mind more easily.

It was in this way that the old tangles of stories were gradually woven into orderly poems—the lays of the Edda as we have them now. But although the old gleemen's

tales were composed into single and shapely poems, no one wrote them down or collected them into a book, till centuries later when the Northmen had made a new home for themselves far away in Iceland.

It was most likely between about 800 and 1000 A.D. that the scalds gradually composed the old rambling stories of their gods and heroes into single lays. And it is interesting to remember that it was just during these two centuries that the Northmen, or Danes as we more often call them, most incessantly harried the coasts of England, invading the country and setting up new homes for themselves in this land, as their brethren were doing in Iceland.

But it was not till much later that the single lays were all written down in Iceland. The earliest manuscript now existing dates from about 1240 A.D., though it is probably founded on an earlier collection which is lost. This book is that storehouse of stories which we call the "Elder Edda." So we have three stages in the history of the "Elder Edda" to remember: the whole collection of lays as we have it now is the youngest stage; the single lays make a middle stage, and the old tangled gleeman's tales, out of which the single lays were made, are the oldest stage.

This old book of poems is called the "Elder Edda" because it has a namesake the "Younger Edda," although this book too is really very old. The "Younger Edda" is written in prose by a learned Icelander called "Snorri." He tells a great many of the stories in the "Elder Edda" over again in his own way, and he also tries to explain some of the hardest parts of the old lays about the gods and the creation of the world.

I spoke just now of the Northmen who settled in England. We may well be proud to remember that we have the adventurous blood of the Vikings in our veins. For these Danes never left England again, but settled down,

married Saxon wives, and became one with the people of the land, who after all were their cousins. From this stock, with one more strain of Norse blood added at the Conquest, the English nation of to-day has sprung. And so we may justly claim some share in the gods and heroes of the Edda. For the old Northmen who first sang and heard these songs are our forefathers as well as the forefathers of the Icelanders and Norwegians. In those long past times of which I have already told you, the fathers of the early Icelandic colonists and of those Northmen who first ravaged and then settled in England, were brothers all living together in one home on the mountains and fiords of Norway, worshipping the same gods and living the same wild, hard life.

But hunting and fishing, making their own tools and weapons, and farming their barren rock-bound land did not long content the wild roving natures of the Vikings. They were a high-spirited, seafaring race who longed for adventure and fight, and they were impatient of any control. So when their Over-lords grew oppressive and life on shore too tame, off they set in their home-built ships across the cold North Sea, to England in the west, France in the south, Iceland in the north. And wherever they landed, their dauntless courage, their unshaken tenacity of purpose, and their power to endure hardships made them all but unconquerable.

In our national character the Northmen imprinted some of their qualities as seamen and adventurers, and in our language they left clear traces of their settlements which to-day may serve to remind us of our near k nship with the nations of the North. Mabelthorpe and Rugby are two examples out of many, of place-names given by the Danes. And Tiw, Woden, Thunor and Frija, (the Saxon forms of Tyr, Odin, Thor and Frigga) have given their names to our four days of the week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

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The stories of the gods and their wonderful world out of which the Edda lays were made are founded on very old northern myths, and indeed the lays themselves may be called myths.

Myths express poetically the early religious beliefs of primitive peoples. But many myths are merely stories or legends woven about the persons of their gods and heroes. True myths in the highest sense can be born only in the childhood of a race. They spring from that wonder and terror which the natural man feels in the presence of the mystery of human life and of the life of nature around him. They are the children of his imagination and of his religious awe ; but they must grow, they cannot be invented. Myths are, as it were, parables and symbols in which man tries to express the inexpressible, his belief in an invisible and spiritual world, his own kinship with the one great Spirit.

The old Northmen pictured these mysterious Powers in the likeness of men, called them Odin and Thor, Baldur and Tyr, and endowed these heroes with divine qualities and powers ; the care of mankind was theirs, as well as the supreme power over the conflicting forces of nature, destructive and life-giving alike. For to the early Northmen life was a ceaseless battle ; they wrested a meagre living from their barren rocks and fells by an incessant struggle with unyielding nature, they robbed the sea of her spoils only at the risk of their own lives. Danger lurked in the frost and snow of winter, in the mountains and crags where they hunted for food. The strife of all nature, of the elements, and the seasons, they saw repeated in the lives of men : good and evil, love and hate, also waged unending war in their own hearts. This struggle they saw acted over again in the world of gods and spirits. Odin and Thor, Baldur and Tyr are warrior-gods, and their warfare against evil giants and monsters is the pattern of what such warfare should be. Each of these hero-warriors is supreme over

one realm of nature. Odin is the god of the wind and tempest, Thor is the dreadful wielder of the thunder-bolt, Baldur is the bright god of the sun, while Frey and his Van-gods are gentler, Ariel-like spirits who float in the summer breeze and live in the summer flowers. Against these kindly powers of summer and life are ranged Loki and the giant powers of winter and death.

When the thunder rolled and rattled overhead the Northmen would say, "Hark! Thor drives his chariot furiously." When the wind howled and tempests blew across the sky, they would say, "There gallops the Wild Huntsman." But the religion of the Northmen was not Nature-worship only; they revered Odin and Thor and the other heroes of Asgard as the highest moral beings, as their own personal gods, to whom every man owed sacrifice and prayer.

Strength and valour, joined to nobility of purpose, were the qualities the Northmen most admired, the qualities of their ideal hero. To this ideal no one of them could ever attain. But they felt that the gods they worshipped had these qualities in perfection. In Odin and Thor, Baldur and Tyr they adored these virtues, in Loki and his monstrous children they detested the vices they scorned—weakness, cunning and cowardice.

But in spite of this worship, the Northmen did not regard all the myths about their gods with religious awe. Many of the Edda stories are only of the nature of tributes to the dazzling personality of the *Æsir*. They are stories in character, as it were, legends invented to glorify the distinctive features of some favourite hero whom the people delighted to honour. These legends were included in the ever-growing cycle of stories which surrounded the figure of each hero, but they were looked upon rather as poetical fictions than as authentic narratives.

The greatest of all the *Æsir* is Odin. He is the supreme god of Heaven, the lord of battle and storm as well as the father and creator of men. Odin is the incarnation

of justice and the inspirer of poetry. Mimer, Odin's uncle, endowed him with both his inspiration as a poet and his wisdom as a judge. In a magic draught the gift of poetry was conveyed, but for wisdom Odin had to pledge his eye. Further, he possesses the spirit of prophecy, he is skilled in the arts of magic and divines secrets hidden from all other eyes by means of his Runes. The bearing and countenance of the king of gods and men, express great nobility of character, determined courage, and a calm fortitude in the face of certain evil to come, the Doom of the *Æsir* of which you shall hear more later on.

The northern people pictured their great All-father in many different disguises. When he came down from his high seat to walk on the earth amongst men, he would often conceal his personality in the dress of an ordinary traveller and call himself "Waywise." He looked like an old man, with a long, dark beard and one piercing eye and a blue cloak hung on his shoulders. Odin's horse is Sleipnir, the swift, dapple grey, eight-footed steed, who carries his master with equal ease down to the dark pit of Helheim, or through the cloudy sky. In the city of Asgard he wears the dress of a warrior, shining gold armour, spear, sword and shield, as beffited the Chief of the warriors of Valhalla. Thence, as "Chooser of the Slain," he sends forth the Valkyrior, fair warrior-maidens who bring in every evening the heroes fallen in fight to feast at the tables of the gods.

At Odin's feet, in his palace of Gladsheim sit two wolves. On his shoulders perch his two ravens, Hugin and Munin (Thought and Memory) whom each day he sends out over the world to bring him news of how men fare and what they do.

Thor is the most glorious of the sons of Odin. As his name tells us, he is the Thunderer ("Thunor" means Thunder). He is pictured as fiery and tempestuous in disposition, heavy and massive in build—he is ruddy in

complexion and red-haired. Perhaps Thor is a more exact image of a stalwart Norseman in the prime of manhood than any other of the *Æsir*.

Odin, on his flying steed, presents an imposing figure amongst kings and great lords in his journeys on earth. Thor, on the other hand, visits the farms of the peasants and the huts of the poor. He travels too, often in the most homely fashion, on his feet, or rides in his rumbling chariot drawn by two he-goats. When Thor passes to Jötunheim the earth flames and the mountains cast forth fire. He sits between his goats and his eyes flash like lightning. His marvellous hammer, the work of dwarfs, is the weapon he hurls against trolls and monsters. Mjölnir has the magic power of returning always to his hands clothed in their mighty iron gloves. Round his waist is the girdle which gives its wearer strength. He is a welcome guest, for while Odin is their judge, Thor is called the "Friend of men." He brings seed-time and harvest, he gives children to the home, from him men ask a marriage blessing, and at the last, Thor who guarded the young life of the new-born babe, honours and cares for the ashes of the dead.

Thor is the champion of the *Æsir* in their struggles with their enemies, the giants, but he is also the guardian of men against the dark powers of evil, against witches and black magic.

Indeed Thor's strength of body was nearly as great as that of the giants against whom he fought. He has been called "the Hercules of the North." Hercules, as I expect you all know, was a Greek hero. If you have not read it already, you should get Hawthorne's "Wonder Book" where the story of Hercules is beautifully told. Then you can compare the Greek and the Northern heroes and see whether you think the name "the Hercules of the North" a good one for Thor. There is certainly one strong point of likeness between Thor and Hercules: like Hercules, Thor made

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a fine use of his great strength, he used it to defend the weak and innocent and to overthrow the wicked and cruel. His dwelling is "Thrudheim" or world of strength. The gift of great strength brings the duty of great labours. Thor's life must be arduous, for his might is great. No easy roads or soft home life are his portion. He must travel by hard and rugged paths and face dangerous monsters. At the end, when the fate of the gods is near at hand, he must deal the death-blow to the most terrible monster of the earth—the sea-serpent, the bitter enemy of gods and men.

If amongst Odin's sons, Thor is the favourite of men, Baldur is the darling of the gods. He is the bright shining one and his palace, Broadblink, sheds its light over the country far and wide.

In Baldur, the Northmen saw the perfect image of beauty, youth and goodness. He is Baldur the Beloved, Baldur the Beautiful, the Bold, the Bright. Everyone and everything loves Baldur, only the wicked Loki is jealous of him, only Loki's dreadful daughter Hela refuses to weep for his death. But Baldur cannot be banished to the land of shadows for ever. His death is the forerunner of disaster, but Odin, and Odin alone, knows that he will live and come again after the Doom of the gods: then he will join his brother heroes on the new spring-earth and once more make all things bright and joyous by his glorious presence. Loki, the Deceiver who compassed the death of Baldur will then be no more. To him there is no return after Ragnarok. Sin and guile will no longer walk abroad amongst the gods.

Tyr is the god of peace and victory, he is the type of perfect strength, courage and fortitude. The Northmen, however, regarded him as a mysterious god and we know less of him than of the other great sons of Odin. Frigga, the wife of Odin, is mistress and chief of all the goddesses of the North. She is the Queen and mother of

the gods. She rules with Odin in his palace of Gladsheim, shares his high seat on Air Throne, his joys and his sorrows. She is the generous giver of all good gifts to the women who look to her as their patron. She brings happiness to the home, to husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter. So much is she the goddess of the home, the good wife and mother who spins wool for her household, that even now some of the Northern people call the stars we know as "Orion's Belt" the "Spindle of Frigg."

Besides the great gods of Asgard, the people of the north distinguished another class of superior beings; by name Vanir or Vans. These were the gods of air and water, and the greater gods admitted them to Asgard and to the company of heroes almost on an equal footing. The chief of these gods is Niörd, the protector of sailors, who lives on the breezy sea-shore at Nootun (the place of ships). Niörd's son Frey, and his daughter Freyja, are among the most charming of the race of Vans. These two youthful deities are much alike. They bring spring and summer, rain and sunshine, buds and blossoms, and joy and beauty to gods and to men.

Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, and the guardian of the Rainbow Bridge, stands apart from all other deities. He alone has strange gold teeth and the sharp senses of a bird, eyes that see a thousand leagues away, and ears that hear the grass grow. But he has also a place in the ranks of the Van-gods, with his coloured bow of light, water and air.

The inferior orders of supernatural beings, inferior that is to the superior gods and Vans, are the races of Elves and Dwarfs. These tiny creatures embody the living and growing life of the world of nature all around us. There are elves of water and elves of air, elves of sunshine and cloud, elves of trees and flowers, and of rocks and rivers. Elves may be light or dark, good or bad.

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The name "Elf" is often kept for the good-natured, little, open-air light elves who are friendly to men, while the cunning, cross-grained, little dark elves are called dwarfs. The friendly elves live above the earth, they make the trees wave their leaves and paint the flowers in all their lovely colours. You may remember how in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* a fairy's work is "to hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear" and the spots in their "gold coats" are "rubies, fairy favours."

One story relates that Odin banished the dwarfs to the caves and holes of the earth as a punishment for killing Kvasir, the best and most learned of men. However, this may be, it is certain that he has supreme power over these mischievous and spiteful little gnomes, he forces them to use their marvellous skill as workers in gold and precious stones at his pleasure and for his service. The weapons they forge are unsurpassed, their jewels are masterpieces of cunning art. Freyja's necklace, "Brisingamen," came from the dark workshops of the dwarfs; Frey's boar-steed, "Golden Bristles," and the folding ship "Skidbladnir" are their handiwork; also Odin's golden spear and his magic ring, Draupnir.

The giants of the earth delight in doing harm to man in their monstrous fashion as the dwarfs do in their tiny gnat-like way. Both are alike the enemies of the *Æsir*, and of their chosen people—the human race. The giants are less clever than the dwarfs, they inflict injury by mere brute force, while the dwarfs inflict it by superior cunning.

But with one or two exceptions (such as *Ægir*, the Sea King) the giants are deceitful, mean and selfish. From the beginning of the world they have waged a never-ending fight against their truthful, noble and generous enemies, the gods of Valhalla.

The arch-enemy of gods and men alike is a monster in the likeness of a god. Worse than frost-giant or

mountain-giant, dwarf or demon, is Loki the Deceiver. He lives amongst the gods but he is of the nature and family of giants. Evil is his good, just as evil is the good of Milton's Satan, and his life is spent in plotting wickedness against the gods with whom he dwells, and against their children, the sons of men. Like him in nature though not in form are his three dreadful children, Hela, Jörmungand and Fenrir, of whom you will learn more in the stories that follow. Loki is the spirit of evil, from whom all other evil springs; though he lives in Asgard he roams up and down on the earth and in the land of giants, scattering evil far and wide. But his daughter Hela may not leave the dark Under-world. Jörmungand, his serpent son, is forced to live in the ocean deeps; while Fenrir is kept in Asgard till his day of binding shall come. No one of Loki's children has so much evil might as their father, but all the evil they can imagine, that they do. But the day of doom will come, for Ragnarok brings eternal death to the brood of monsters and their dread father. For a season only they are allowed to live and trouble the earth.

For there are beings in whose hands all fates lie, the final fate of the world, and even that of the arch-deceiver, Loki himself. These mysterious beings the Northmen called the "Norns" or Fates. They are three sisters and their names are Urd, Verdandi and Skuld. They are of giant race and they reign supreme over the lives and fates of gods and men alike. For we must remember that the *Æsir* were not immortal: Ragnarok must come, the all-powerful Norns have willed it so.

The whole of life is in the hands of the Norns and life is the web they spin. They deal out joy and sorrow, sickness and health, life and death.

In the Faroe Isles, where many old Norse customs and sayings live on, the people still call the white spots on the nails of their hands "Norn-spots," the spots of Fate

or Luck. These spots are supposed to be prophetic of some future event, a piece of luck, a boon from the governors of Fate, the Norns.

The world over which the Norns had supreme power and which was inhabited by the gods, men and giants we have been talking about, is described for us in the Edda as flat and round and is something like the diagrams you will find in this book.

Midgard or the world of men, is as its name tells us, the middle world. Upon it rests the arch of Heaven. Outside Midgard lies the circle of the sea, and beyond the sea in the far north-west lies Utgard, or the outer world, the home of giants and frost. Asgard in the midst of the earth, is a fair city upon a hill, overlooking the whole earth, which the gods built and fortified for their own abode. Here was the great hall Valhalla, and countless palaces of the gods besides.

Deep below the earth lie Niflheim and Helheim, the kingdoms of the dead.

Towering high above all worlds and reaching down beneath the depths of the earth, lower than Helheim itself, grows Yggdrasil, the evergreen World-Ash. It has, three roots, one stretches far away into the sky, above the homes of gods and men, one pierces down through Niflheim into the gloomy region of Helheim, and the third reaches to Utgard the land of the frost-giants.

In the branches of the Ash sits an eagle, four stags browse on its leaves, at the lowest root in Helheim gnaws the dragon, Nidhogg ; up and down the tree from top to bottom runs a spiteful squirrel, Ratatosk (Rat-tooth), making mischief between Nidhogg and the Eagle.

High above the topmost root is the Sacred Fountain of Urd. From this well Mimer gave Odan his draught of Wisdom. Its waters feed the roots of the Ash, and from it all rivers of earth flow. Here, too, is the home of the Norns, the awful Sisters of Fate.

How then did this wonderful Life-Ash and all the worlds under its shade come into being? For in the beginning of time there was neither Asgard nor Midgard, no life of man or god, of plant or beast. As the old lay tells us —one giant was all.

"In the beginning of all things Ymir lived,
There was neither shore, nor sea, nor cold salt billows,
There was no earth then, nor sky above,
Nothing but a yawning abyss, nowhere was grass."

The "yawning abyss," the nothingness from which the world was made, was called "Ginnungagap." From out of this abyss, a world as much "without form and void" as the world of the first chapter of Genesis, Odin and two brother gods created the earth. According to one old tale they bid Midgard rise out of the sea, according to another they created the world from the body of their fallen foe, the first giant Ymir. To quote the words of the Edda again :

"Out of Ymir's flesh was the world created,
The mountains out of his bones,
The heavens from the skull of the cold Frost-giant,
Out of his blood the surging Sea."

Man was the crowning work of creation; Odin and his brother gods found two blocks of wood on the sea-shore in the likeness of man and woman. These tree-like forms were the work of dwarfs. Into them the gods breathed the breath of life, and from Ask and Embla the human race has sprung.

Over the tribes of men whom they had created the *Æsir* ruled, protecting them from evil and inspiring them to good. In these days the Sons of God walked familiarly on the Earth amongst the sons of men. Odin from Asgard travelled to Midgard that he might know and help his children on Earth.

In spite of the stirring adventures and jovial feasts in which the gods spent their days, whether in Valhalla or

abroad, a cloud hung over them ; a cloud which grew darker after the death of Baldur the Beloved.

Odin, in his wisdom, foresaw most clearly the doom of the gods, and such a clear knowledge of coming evil could not but add to the many sorrows and cares which weighed on the All-Father's heart and showed in his anxious face.

No one, not even he, could tell when the fatal day, Ragnarok, would come, but it behoved all to be ready and watching, since the Norns had spoken and the judgment of the gods must fall.

Calmly, without complaining, the *Æsir* awaited their fate. If the time allotted to them was to be but short, it was the more important that they should use this span well. So, in spite of the dark shadow they hoped ; in spite of a fear at their hearts, they lived and acted with cheerful bearing and dauntless courage. Odin, in one of the *Edda* lays declares that :

" The gods must die ;
Alone immortal lives
The white flower, Fame,
Earned by a glorious life."

Their noble purpose in the face of death has gained for the *Æsir* this deathless Fame, the sole consolation they desired.

"Ragnarok is come!" At this cry, as Odin had foreseen, terror and ruin cover the earth ; from the depths of the ocean rises Jörmungand, the great sea-serpent, and breaking forth from his appointed limits, he overwhelms the earth and drowns it in the raging sea. His brother, Fenrir, the dreadful wolf, bound by Gleipnir to the rock, bursts his chain and dashes out to attack and slay ; while Loki, their father, inventor of wickedness, frees himself from the torturing punishment inflicted by the *Æsir* as a reward of his evil deeds, and leads on a troop of hostile giants against his lords and masters.

The last day of horror is announced by the cock, "Gold-comb," crowing over Asgard to call the gods to the fight. From Giant-land a bright red cock shrills out his clarion, and out of the dismal pit of Helheim a sooty red cock warns the prisoners below to awake and join in the struggle: Garm, the dog of Darkness and sentinel of Hell-mouth, barks madly at the unwonted uproar, increasing the tumult by his bellowing. In vain does Odin take counsel of the wise Mimer. Heimdall's horn has assembled the *Æsir* on their last battle-field; the final scene, Ragnarok, has come.

The world is shaken to its inmost depths; even the mighty World-Ash trembles to the roots. Dwarfs moan outside their rocky homes; Skinfaxi and Rimfaxi (Golden Mane and Hoary Mane), the horses that draw the radiant chariot of the sun up and down the steeps of Heaven, have taken their last journey. Howling with wide-open jaws, the monster wolves, Hati and Skoll, devour both Sun and Moon. Darkness falls on the face of the earth. Then in the black and frost-bound winter the great battle begins, lit only by the flaming sword of Surt, chieftain of the sons of Muspell, the giants of fire.

Odin, king of the gods, wrestles with Fenrir in deadly combat and is killed by the monster. Thor and Jörmungand prove each the banesman of the other; Tyr and Garm, the dog of Hell, fall in like manner; Loki is slain, but not before he has given his death-wound to the radiant Heimdall. Frey, the summer king, struggles in vain against the fire-king Surt. Though their enemies have fallen, the gods are conquered, are dead.

Now the stars fall from heaven, the sea rises up and swallows the earth, flaming fire reaches even beyond the clouds. The race of man is blotted out. Nothing remains but fire and flood, destruction and desolation.

Ragnarok has come!

"Few may see further off
Then when Odin meets the wolf."

Nevertheless after Ragnarok a new and fairer earth will arise once more out of the sea, a new race of men fed on morning dew will live and enjoy its wondrous green, a new sun will shine in greater brilliance. The gods will return to their bright dwellings once more ; and there together with men they will rejoice in their golden playthings of the Past, and live in splendour and peace in their glittering Diamond Hall. For the Greatest and Highest will return to rule over the sons of men and the noble company of gods. Amongst them all will be Baldur with his brethren, the children of Odın ; the sons of the mighty Thor will join the new-born ranks of the *Æsir*. Then will reign anew a Golden Age, fields will bring forth their fruits unsown ; war is no more, sorrow and sighing have passed away. All is universal peace.



DIAGRAM OF THE WORLDS OF GODS AND MEN.

ODIN.

CHAPTER I.

Odin leaves Asgard, and goes forth to fight Monsters on Earth. He teaches the people His visit to Mimer's Well.—the Price of Wisdom. Odin broods over Nifheim and ponders its mysteries.

IN Asgard city, Odin, the watchful All-Father chief of the gods, mounted Air Throne, and looked over the whole earth, whilst the *Æsir* stood all round waiting to hear what he thought about it.

"The earth is very beautiful," said Odin, from the top of his throne, "very beautiful in every part, even to the shores of the dark North Sea; but, alas! the men of the earth are puny and fearful. At this moment I see a three-headed giant striding out of Jotunheim. He throws a shepherd-boy into the sea, and puts the whole of the flock into his pocket. Now he takes them out again one by one, and cracks their bones as if they were hazel-nuts, whilst, all the time, men look on, and do nothing."

"Father," cried Thor in a rage, "last night I forged for myself a belt, a glove, and a hammer,

with which three things I will go forth alone to Jötunheim."

Thor went, and Odin looked again.

As he looked, he saw so many giants and monsters flourishing in the world, that he turned to Queen Frigga, saying, "It is quite clear, Frigga, that I must remain in idleness no longer at Asgard, for monsters are bred up in Jötunheim, and the earth has need of me." So saying, descending instantly from Air Throne, Odin went forth of Asgard's golden gates to tread the earth of common men, fighting to pierce through Jötunheim, and slay its monstrous sins.

In his journeyings Odin mixed freely with the people of the countries through which he passed ; shared with them toil and pleasure, war and grief ; taught them out of his own large experience, inspired them with his noble thoughts, and exalted them by his example. Even to the oldest he could teach much ; and in the evening, when the labours of the day were ended, and the sun cast slanting rays upon the village green, it was pleasant to see the sturdy village youths grouped round that noble chief, hanging open mouthed upon his words, as he told them of his great fight with the giant of long ago, and then pointing towards Jötunheim, explained to them how that fight was not yet over, for that giants and monsters grew round them on every side, and they, too, might do battle bravely, and be heroes and Æsir of the earth.

One evening, after thus drinking in his burning words they all trooped together to the village smithy, and Odin forged for them all night arms and armour, instructing them, at the same time, in their use. In the morning he said, "Farewell, children; I have further to go than you can come; but do not forget me when I am gone, nor how to fight as I have taught you. Never cease to be true and brave; never turn your arms against one another; and never turn them away from the giant and the oppressor."

Then the villagers returned to their homes and their field-labour, and Odin pressed on, through trackless uninhabited woods, up silent mountains, over the lonely ocean, until he reached that strange, mysterious meeting-place of sea and sky. There, brooding over the waters like a grey sea fog, sat Mimer, guardian of the well where wit and wisdom lie hidden.

"Mimer," said Odin, going up to him boldly, "let me drink of the waters of wisdom."

"Truly, Odin," answered Mimer, "it is a great treasure that you seek, and one which many have sought before, but who, when they knew the price of it, turned back."

Then replied Odin, "I would give my right hand for wisdom willingly."

"Nay," rejoined the remorseless Mimer, "it is not your right hand, but your right eye you must give."

Odin was very sorry when he heard the words

of Mimer, and yet he did not deem the price too great ; for plucking out his right eye, and casting it from him, he received in return a draught of the fathomless deep. As Odin gave back the horn into Mimer's hand he felt as if there were a fountain of wisdom springing up within him—an inward light ; for which you may be sure he never grudged having given his perishable eye. Now, also, he knew what it was necessary for him ¹⁰ to do in order to become a really noble Asa, and that was to push on to the extreme edge of the earth itself, and to peep over into Niflheim. Odin knew it was precisely that he must do ; and precisely that he did. Onward and northward he went over ice-bound seas, through twilight, fog, and snow, right onward in the face of winds that were like swords until he came into the unknown land, where sobs, and sighs, and sad, unfinished shapes were drifting up and down. "Then," said ²⁰ Odin, thoughtfully, "I have come to the end of all creation, and a little further on Niflheim must lie."

Accordingly he pushed on further and further until he reached the earth's extremest edge, where, lying down and leaning over from its last cold peak, he looked into the gulf below. It was Niflheim. At first Odin imagined that it was only empty darkness ; but, after hanging there three nights and days, his eye fell on one of ³⁰ Yggdrasil's mighty stems. Yggdrasil was the old earth-tree, whose roots sprang far and wide, from

Jötunheim, from above, and this, the oldest of the three, out of Niflheim. Odin looked long upon its time-worn, knotted fibres, and watched how they were for ever gnawed by Nidhögg the envious serpent, and his brood of poisonous diseases. Then he wondered what he should see next ; and one by one spectres arose from Naströnd, the Shore of Corpses—arose and wandered pale, naked, nameless, and without a home. Then Odin looked down deeper into the abyss of abysses, and saw all its shapeless, nameless ills ; whilst far below him, deeper than Nastrond, Yggdrasil, and Nidhögg, roared Hvergelmir, the boiling cauldron of evil. Nine nights and days this brave wise Asa hung over Niflheim pondering. More brave and more wise he turned away from it than when he came. It is true that he sighed often on his road thence to Jötunheim ; but is it not always thus that wisdom and strength come to us weeping ?

20

CHAPTER II.

Odin in Jötunheim. Loki's monstrous Children and their fate. Odin sees the Rainbow-bridge and its Keeper Heimdall.

WHEN Odin got to the land of giants, he fought with the three wicked children of Loki, the con-

triver of evil, those monsters whom he had before seen from Air Throne. Jörmungand, the Midgard serpent, he threw into the deep ocean where he went on growing till he had encircled the whole earth, and his tail grew down his throat. Hela, half-corpse, half-queen, he cast through the Abyss into Helheim to rule over the Dead. Fenrir, most ferocious of wolves, he took home with him to Valhalla in the hopes of taming him. So Fenrir followed, and Odin led the way out of Jötunheim, across the ocean, over the earth, until he came to the heavenly hills, which held up the southern sky tenderly in their glittering arms. There, half on the mountain-top and half in air, sat Heimdall, guardian of the tremulous bridge Bifrost, that arches from earth to heaven.

Heimdall was a tall, white Van, with golden teeth, and a wonderful horn, called the Giallar Horn, which he generally kept hidden under the tree Yggdrasil; but when he blew it the sound went out into all worlds.

Now, Odin liked the looks of Heimdall, and talked long to him, and in the course of their talk Heimdall told him many strange things, and amongst others, that he could hear the grass grow and the wool on the backs of sheep, and strangest of all he told him about the Norns, those three mysterious mighty maidens, Past, Present, and Future, through whose cold fingers run the golden threads of Time and who ever sit by Urda's sacred fount which springs above the arch of Bifrost.

CHAPTER III.

Odin's return to Asgard. He tells his story to the Gods and Goddesses. Their journey to Bifrost and thence to Urda's Fount. Thor learns that all cannot travel by the same road. The Three Fatal Sisters working the Web of Time.

ON his return to Asgard, Odin walked through the golden gates of the City into the palace of Gladheim, and into the hall Valhalla, where, just then, the *Æsir* and *Asyniur* were assembled at their evening meal. Odin sat down to the table without speaking, and, still absent and meditative, proceeded to carve the great boar, *Sæhrimnir*, which every evening eaten, was every morning whole again. Not till after supper did Odin begin to relate his adventures to the *Æsir* and *Asyniur*. He told them all about Heimdall, and how he had seen his bridge Bifrost and what he had heard of Urda and the Norns. Frigga and indeed all the *Æsir* and *Asyniur* were so much struck by this story that they determined to visit Heimdall the next day, in order that they might see these marvels for themselves.

When they arrived at Bifrost, they were amazed at the bridge Odin had described to them. And well might they be amazed, for the like of it was *never* seen on the ground. Trembling and glittering it swung across the sky, up from the top of

the mountain to the clouds, and down again into the distant sea.

"Bifröst! Bifröst!" exclaimed the *Æsir*, wonderingly; and Heimdall was pleased at their surprise.

"At the arch's highest point," said he, pointing upward, "rises that fountain of which I spoke. Do you wish to see it to-day?"

"That do we, indeed," cried all the *Æsir* in a breath. "Quick, Heimdall, and unlock the bridge's golden gate."

Then Heimdall took all his keys out, and fitted them into the diamond lock till he found the right one, and the gate flew open with a sound at the same time sad and cheerful, like the dripping of leaves after a thunder-shower.

The *Æsir* pressed in; but, as they passed him, Heimdall laid his hand upon Thor's shoulder, and said "I am very sorry, Thor: but it cannot be helped. You must go to the fountain alone by another way; for you are so strong and heavy, that if you were to put your foot on Bifröst, either it would tremble in pieces beneath your weight, or take fire from the friction of your iron heels. Yonder, however, are two river-clouds, called Kormt and Ermt, through which you can wade to the Sacred Urd, and you will assuredly reach it in time, though the waters of the clouds are strong and deep."

At the words of Heimdall Thor fell back from the bridge's head, vexed and sorrowful. "Am I

to be sent away, then, and have to do disagreeable things," said he, "just because I am so strong? After all, what are Urða and the Norns to me, and Körnt and Ernt? I will go back to Asgard again."

"Nay, Thor," said Odin, "I pray you, do not anything so foolish. Think again, I beseech you, what it is that we are going to see and hear. Körnt and Ernt lie before you, as Bifrost before us. It is yonder, above both, that we go. Neither ^{is} can it much matter, Thor, whether we reach the Fountain of Urd over Bifrost or through the cloud."

Then Thor blushed with shame at his own weakness, which had made him regret his strength; and, without any more grumbling or hanging back, he plunged into the dreadful river-clouds, whose dark vapours closed around him and covered him. He was hidden from sight, and the *Æsir* went on their way over the glittering bridge. ^{so}

Daintily and airily they trod over it; they swung themselves up the swinging arch; they reached its summit on a pale, bright cloud. Thor was there already waiting for them, drenched and weary, but cheerful and bold. Then, all together, they knocked at the door of the pale, bright cloud; it blew open, and they passed in. Oh! then what did they see! Looking up to an infinite height through the purple air, they saw towering above them Yggdrasil's fairest branches, leafy and of a tender green, which also stretched far and wide;

but, though they looked long, the *Æsir* could distinguish no topmost bough, and it almost seemed to them that, from somewhere up above, this mighty earth-tree must draw another root, so firmly and so tall it grew. On one side stood the Palace of the Norns, which was so bright that it almost blinded them to look at it, and on the other the Urda fountain plashed its cool waters—rising, falling, glittering, as nothing ever glitters on this side to the clouds. Two ancient swans swam under the fount, and around it sat Three. Ah! how shall I describe them—Urd, Verdandi, Skuld. They were mighty, they were wilful, and one was veiled. Sitting upon the Doomstead, they watched the water as it rose and fell, and passed golden threads from one to another. Verdandi plucked them with busy fingers from Skuld's reluctant hand, and wove them in and out quickly, almost carelessly; for some she tore and blemished, and some she cruelly spoiled. Then Urd took the woof away from her, smoothed its rough places, and covered up some of the torn, gaping holes; but she hid away many of the bright parts, too, and then rolled it all round her great roller, Oblivion, which grew thicker and heavier every moment. And so they went on, Verdandi drawing from Skuld, and Urd from Verdandi; but whence Skuld drew her separate bright threads no one could see. She never seemed to reach the end of them, and neither of the sisters ever stopped or grew weary of her work.

The *Æsir* stood apart watching, and it was a great sight. They looked in the face of Urd, and fed on wisdom ; they studied the countenance of Verdandi, and drank bitter strength ; they glanced through the veil of Skuld, and tasted hope. At length, with full hearts, they stole away silently, one by one, out by the pale, open door, re-crossed the bridge, and stood once more by the side of Heimdall on the heavenly hills ; then they went home again. Nobody spoke as they went ; but no ever afterwards it was an understood thing that the *Æsir* should fare to the Doomstead of the Nornir once in every day.

HOW THOR WENT TO JÖTUNHEIM.

CHAPTER I.

Thor's start for the Land of Giants. The Peasant's Hut, and a meal of Goat-flesh. A night in the Giant's Glove. Thor meets Skrymir in the Forest, and challenges him. Thor's famous Hammer fails against Giant Strength.

ONCE on a time, Asa Thor and Loki set out on a journey from Asgard to Jötunheim. They travelled in Thor's chariot, drawn by two milk-white goats. It was a somewhat cumbrous iron chariot, and the wheels made a rumbling noise as it moved, which sometimes startled the ladies of Asgard, and made them tremble ; but Thor liked it, thought the noise sweeter than any music, and was never so happy as when he was journeying in it from one place to another.

They travelled all day, and in the evening they came to a countryman's house. It was a poor, lonely place ; but Thor descended from his chariot,

and determined to pass the night there. The countryman, however, had no food in his house to give these travellers; and Thor, who liked to feast himself and make every one feast with him, was obliged to kill his own two goats and serve them up for supper. He invited the countryman and his wife and children to sup with him; but before they began to eat he made one request of them.

"Do not, on any account," he said, "break or throw away any of the bones of the goats you are going to eat for supper."

"I wonder why," said the peasant's son, Thialfi, to his sister Roska. Roska could not think of any reason, and by-and-bye Thialfi happened to have a very nice little bone given him with some marrow in it. "Certainly there can be no harm in my breaking just this one," he said to himself; "it would be such a pity to lose the marrow;" and as Asa Thor's head was turned another way, he slyly²⁰ broke the bone in two, sucked the marrow, and then threw the pieces into the goats' skins, where Thor had desired that all the bones might be placed. I do not know whether Thialfi was uneasy during the night about what he had done; but in the morning he found out the reason of Asa Thor's command, and received a lesson on "wondering why," which he never forgot all his life after.

As soon as Asa Thor rose in the morning he³⁰ took his hammer, Miölnir, in his hand, and held it

over the goat-skins as they lay on the floor, whispering runes the while. They were dead skins with dry bones on them when he began to speak ; but as he said the last word, Thialfi, who was looking curiously on, saw two live goats spring up and walk towards the chariot, as fresh and well as when they brought the chariot up to the door Thialfi hoped. But no ; one of the goats limped a little with his hind leg, and Asa Thor saw it.

His brow grew dark as he looked, and for a minute Thialfi thought he would run far, far into the forest, and never come back again ; but one look more at Asa Thor's face, angry as it was, made him change his mind. He thought of a better thing to do than running away. He came forward, threw himself at the Asa's feet, and, confessing what he had done, begged pardon for his disobedience. Thor listened, and the displeased look passed away from his face.

" You have done wrong, Thialfi," he said, raising him up ; " but as you have confessed your fault so bravely, instead of punishing you, I will take you with me on my journey, and teach you myself the lesson of obedience to the *Æsir* which is, I see, wanted."

Roska chose to go with her brother, and from that day Thor had two faithful servants, who followed him wherever he went.

The chariot and goats were now left behind ; but, with Loki and his two new followers, Thor journeyed on to the end of Manheim, over the sea.

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and then on; on, in the strange, barren, misty land of Jötunheim. Sometimes they crossed great mountains; sometimes they had to make their way among torn and rugged rocks, which often, through the mist, appeared to them to wear the forms of men, and once for a whole day they traversed a thick and tangled forest. In the evening of that day, being very much tired, they saw with pleasure that they had come upon a spacious hall, of which the door, as broad as the house itself, stood wide open.

"Here we may very comfortably lodge for the night," said Thor; and they went in and looked about them.

The house appeared to be perfectly empty; there was a wide hall, and five smaller rooms opening into it. They were, however, too tired to examine it carefully, and as no inhabitants made their appearance, they ate their supper in the hall, and lay down to sleep. But they had not rested 20 long before they were disturbed by strange noises, groanings, mutterings, and snortings, louder than any animal that they had ever seen in their lives could make. By-and-bye the house began to shake from side to side, and it seemed as if the very earth trembled. Thor sprang up in haste, and ran to the open door; but, though he looked earnestly into the starlit forest, there was no enemy to be seen anywhere. Loki and Thialfi, after groping about for a time, found a sheltered chamber to the right, where they thought they could

finish their night's rest in safety; but Thor, with Mjolnir in his hand, watched at the door of the house all night. As soon as the day dawned he went out into the forest, and there, stretched on the ground close by the house, he saw a strange, uncouth, gigantic shape of a man, out of whose nostrils came a breath which swayed the trees to their very tops. There was no need to wonder any longer what the disturbing noises had been.
■ Thor fearlessly walked up to this strange monster to have a better look at him; but at the sound of his footsteps the giant-shape rose slowly, stood up an immense height, and looked down upon Thor with two great misty eyes, like blue mountain-lakes.

“Who are you?” said Thor, standing on tiptoe, and stretching his neck to look up; “and why do you make such a noise as to prevent your neighbours from sleeping?”
■ “My name is Skrymir,” said the giant sternly; “I need not ask yours. You are little Asa Thor of Asgard; but pray, now, what have you done with my glove?”

As he spoke he stooped down, and picked up the ball where Thor and his companions had passed the night, and which, in truth, was nothing more than his glove, the room where Loki and Thialfi had slept being the thumb.

Thor rubbed his eyes, and felt as if he must be dreaming. Rousing himself, however, he raised Mjolnir in his hand, and, trying to keep his eyes.



GANT SKEYMIR AND THOR.

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fixed on the giant's face, which seemed to be always changing, he said, "It is time that you should know, Skrymir, that I am come to Jötunheim to fight and conquer such evil giants as you are, and, little as you think me, I am ready to try my strength against yours."

"Try it then," said the giant.

And Thor, without another word, threw Miölnir at his head.

"Ah! Ah!" said the giant; "did a leaf touch to me?"

Again Thor seized Miölnir, which always returned to his hand, however far he cast it from him, and threw it with all his force.

The giant put up his hand to his forehead "I think," he said, "that an acorn must have fallen on my head."

A third time Thor struck a blow, the heaviest that ever fell from the hand of an Asa; but this time the giant laughed out loud. 20

"There is surely a bird on that tree," he said, "who has let a feather fall on my face."

Then, without taking any further notice of Thor, he swung an immense wallet over his shoulder, and, turning his back upon him, struck into a path that led from the forest. When he had gone a little way he looked round, his immense face appearing less like a human countenance than some strange, uncouthly-shaped stone toppling on a mountain precipice. 30

"Ving-Thor," he said, "let me give you a piece

of good advice before I go. When you get to Utgard don't make much of yourself. You think me a tall man, but you have taller still to see; and you yourself are a very little mannikin. Turn back home whence you came, and be satisfied to have learned something of yourself by your journey to Jötunheim."

"Mannikin or not, *that* will I never do," shouted Asa Thor after the giant. "We will meet again, and something more will we learn or teach each other."

CHAPTER II.

The Enchanted City on the Plain. Thor comes to King Ulgard's Palace. The Giants' welcome. Thor's three feats—the Drinking Match—the Game of Cat-lifting—Wrestling with the Crone. Thor recognises King Utgard. The Giant explains Thor's failure. The uses of Travelling.

THOR and his companions now pursued their way further into the land of giants. Before the sun was quite high in the heavens they came out of the forest, and at noon they found themselves on a vast barren plain, where stood a great city, whose walls of dark, rough stone were so high, that Thor had to bend his head quite far back to see the top of them. When they approached the entrance of this city they found that the gates were closed and

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barred, but the space between the bars was so large that Thor passed through easily, and his companions followed him. The streets of the city were gloomy and still. They walked on for some time without meeting any one; but at length they came to a very high building, of which the gates stood open.

"Let us go in and see what is going on here," said Thor; and they went.

After crossing the threshold they found themselves in an immense banqueting hall. A table stretched from one end to the other of it; stone thrones stood round the table, and on every throne sat a giant, each one, as Thor glanced round, appearing more grim, and cold, and stony than the rest. One among them sat on a raised seat, and appeared to be the chief; so to him Thor approached and paid his greetings.

The giant chief just glanced at him, and, without rising, said, in a somewhat careless manner, "It is, I think, a foolish custom to tease tired travellers with questions about their journey. I know without asking that you, little fellow, are Asa Thor. Perhaps, however, you may be in reality taller than you appear; and as it is a rule here that no one shall sit down to table till he has performed some wonderful feat, let us hear what you are famed for, and in what way you choose to prove yourself worthy to sit down in the company of giants."

"I will try a drinking-match with any of you,"

30

Thor said, shortly ; for, to tell the truth, he cared not to perform anything very worthy in the company in which he found himself.

King Utgard appeared pleased with this choice, and ordered one of his servants to bring in his drinking-cup, called the "cup of penance," which it was his custom to make his guests drain at a draught, if they had broken any of the ancient rules of the society.

"There!" he said, handing it to Thor, "we call it well drunk if a person empties it at a single draught. Some, indeed, take two to it ; but the very puniest can manage it in three."

Thor looked into the cup ; it appeared to him long, but not so very large after all, and being thirsty he put it to his lips, and thought to make short work of it, and empty it at one good, hearty pull. He drank, and put the cup down again ; but, instead of being empty, it was now just so full that it could be moved without danger of spilling.

"Ha! ha! You are keeping all your strength for the second pull I see," said Utgard, looking in. Without answering, Thor lifted the cup again, and drank with all his might till his breath failed ; but, when he put down the cup, the liquor had only sunk down a little from the brim.

"If you mean to take three draughts to it," said Utgard, "you are really leaving yourself a very unfair share for the last time. Look to yourself, Ving Thor ; for, if you do not acquit yourself

HOW THOR WENT TO JÖTUNHEIM. 21

better in other feats, we shall not think so much of you here as they say the *Æsir* do in Asgard."

At this speech Thor felt angry, and, seizing the cup again, he drank a third time, deeper and longer than he had yet done, but, when he looked into the cup, he saw that a very small part only of its contents had disappeared. Wearied and disappointed he put the cup down, and said he would try no more to empty it.

"It is pretty plain," said the King, looking round on the company, "that Asa Thor is by no means the kind of man we always supposed him to be."

"Nay," said Thor, "I am willing to try another feat, and you yourselves shall choose what it shall be."

"Well," said the King, "there is a game at which our children are used to play. A short time ago I dare not have named it to Asa Thor; but now I am curious to see how he will acquit himself in it. It is merely to lift my cat from the ground—a childish amusement truly."

As he spoke a large, grey cat sprang into the hall, and Thor, stooping forward, put his hand under it to lift it up. He tried gently at first; but by degrees he put forth all his strength, tugging and straining as he had never done before; but the utmost he could do was to raise one of the cat's paws a little way from the ground.

"It is just as I thought," said King Utgard, looking round with a smile; "but we all are will-

ing to allow that the cat *is* large, and Thor but a little fellow."

"Little as you think me," cried Thor, "who is there who will dare to wrestle with me in my anger?"

"In truth," said the King, "I don't think there is any one here who would choose to wrestle with you; but, if wrestle you must, I will call in that old crone Elli. She has, in her time, laid low many a better man than Asa Thor has shown himself to be."

The crone came. She was old, withered, and toothless, and Thor shrank from the thought of wrestling with her; but he had no choice. She threw her arms round him, and drew him towards the ground, and the harder he tried to free himself, the tighter grew her grasp. They struggled long. Thor strove bravely, but a strange feeling of weakness and weariness came over him, and at length he tottered and fell down on one knee before her. At this sight all the giants laughed aloud, and Utgard coming up, desired the old woman to leave the hall, and proclaimed that the trials were over. No one of his followers would now contend with Asa Thor, he said, and night was approaching. He then invited Thor and his companions to sit down at the table, and spend the night with him as his guests. Thor, though feeling somewhat perplexed and mortified, accepted his invitation courteously, and showed, by his agreeable behaviour during the evening, that he

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knew how to bear being conquered with a good grace.

In the morning, when Thor and his companions were leaving the city, the King himself accompanied them without the gates ; and Thor, looking steadily at him when he turned to bid him farewell, perceived, for the first time, that he was the very same Giant Skrymir with whom he had met in the forest.

"Come, now, Asa Thor," said the giant with a strange sort of smile on his face, "tell me truly, before you go, how you think your journey has turned out, and whether or not I was right in saying that you would meet with better men than yourself in Jötunheim."

"I confess freely," answered Asa Thor, looking up without any false shame on his face, "that I have acquitted myself but humbly, and it grieves me ; for I know that in Jötunheim henceforward it will be said that I am a man of little worth." 20

"By my troth ! no," cried the giant, heartily. "Never should you have come into my city if I had known what a mighty man of valour you really are ; and now that you are safely out of it, I will, for once, tell the truth to you, Thor. All this time I have been deceiving you by my enchantments. When you met me in the forest, and hurled Miölnir at my head, I should have been crushed by the weight of your blows had I not skilfully placed a mountain between myself and you, on which the strokes of your hammer

fell, and where you cleft three deep ravines, which shall henceforth become verdant valleys. In the same manner I deceived you about the contests in which you engaged last night. When you took such deep draughts from the horn, you little knew what a wonderful feat you were performing. The other end of that horn reached the ocean, and when you come to the shore you will see how far its waters have fallen away, and how much the ¹⁰ deep sea itself has been diminished by your draught. Hereafter, men watching the going out of the tide will call it the ebb, or draught of Thor. Scarcely less wonderful was the prowess you displayed in the second trial. What appeared to you to be a cat, was, in reality, the Midgard serpent, which encircles the world. When we saw you succeed in moving it we trembled lest the very foundations of earth and sea should be shaken by your strength. Nor need you be ²⁰ ashamed of having been overthrown by the old woman Elli, for she is old age; and there never was, and never will be, one whom she has not the power to lay low. We must now part, and you had better not come here again, or attempt anything further against my city; for I shall always defend it by fresh enchantments, and you will never be able to do anything against me."

At these words Thor raised Miölnir, and was about to challenge the giant to a fresh trial of ³⁰ strength; but, before he could speak, Utgarda vanished from his sight; and, turning round to

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look for the city, he found that it, too, had disappeared, and that he was standing alone on a smooth, green, empty plain.

"What a fool I have been," said Asa Thor, aloud, "to allow myself to be deceived by a mountain giant!"

"Ah," answered a voice from above, "I told you, you would learn to know yourself better by your journey to Jotunheim. It is the great use of travelling." 10

Thor turned quickly round again, thinking to see Skrymir behind him; but, after looking on every side, he could perceive nothing, but that a high, cloud-capped mountain, which he had noticed on the horizon, appeared to have advanced to the edge of the plain.

CHAPTER III.

Thor sets out again to Jötunheim to fetch Mile-deep for Ægir from Hymir at the Frozen Sea. Hymir and Thor go a-fishing. Thor wounds Jormungand, and helped by the Golden-haired Giantess defeats Hymir's Magic. He carries off the Cauldron, Mile-deep, to old King Ægir, pursued by Many-headed Giants.

THOR turned away from Giant-land, and on the road homeward he passed through the Sea-King's dominions. There he found that Ægir the Old

was giving a banquet to all the *Æsir* in his wide coral-caves. At a little distance Thor stood still to listen and to look. It was a fair sight: cave within cave stretched out before him decked with choicest shells, whilst far inward lay the banqueting-hall, lighted with shining gold; white and red coral-pillars stood at uneven distances; the bright-browed *Æsir* reclined at the board on soft water couches; *Ægir's* daughters—the fair-haired waves—murmured sweet music as they waited on their guests; and little baby-ripples ran about laughing in all the corners. Thor walked through the caves and entered the hall. As he did so Odin looked up from his place at *Ægir's* right hand, and said,—

"Good evening, son Thor; how has it fared with you in Jötunheim?"

Thor's face grew a little cloudy at this question, and he only answered,—

"Not as it ought to have done, father." Then he placed himself amongst *Ægir's* guests.

"In my dominions," said King *Ægir*, looking all round, "an extraordinary thing has happened."

"And what may that be, brother?" asked Niörd.

"From the shores of Jötunheim," answered *Ægir*, "the sea has run back a quarter of a mile, drawing itself away as if a giant were drinking it in."

"Is that all you have got to say, father?" said a tall Wave, as she swept her hair over the Sea-

King's shoulder, and peeped up from behind him ; "is that all you know of the wonders which are going on in your deep home ? Listen."

Then Ægir bent forward on his seat ; the Æsir all ceased speaking, and drew in their breath ; the waves raised their arched necks, and were still, listening. From a great way off came the sound of a sullen swell.

"Who is that speaking ?" asked Odin.

"That is Jörmungand speaking," said Thor. 10

"And what does he say, Thor ?"

"He says that I could not conquer him."

"Pass round the foaming mead," cried Ægir, who saw that it was time to turn the conversation.

But alas ! Ægir's mead-kettle was so small, that before it had gone half down the table it stood empty before Tyr.

"There is a giant called Hymir," remarked Tyr, "who lives far over the stormy waves to eastward at the end of heaven." 20

The Æsir all looked up.

"He has a kettle," Tyr went on to say, "which is a mile deep, and which would certainly hold mead enough for all this company."

"If Hymir would lend it to us," said Ægir, "we could finish our supper ; but who would go to the end of heaven to borrow a kettle ?"

Then Thor rose from the table, and began to tighten round him his belt of power ; he put on his iron gloves, and took Miölnir in his 30 hand.

"What! off again to Giant-land, Ving-Thor?" cried Ægir.

"Didn't you say you wanted Mile-deep?" said Thor. "I am going to borrow it of Hymir for you. Will you come with me, Tyr?"

Tyr sprang up joyfully, and the two brothers started on their journey. When they arrived at Hymir's dwelling, which was a roughly-hewn cavern on the shore of a frozen sea, the first person they met was a wonderful giantess with nine hundred heads, in which glittered fiery eyes, and which grew out from all parts of her body, so that it was impossible to tell whether she was walking upon her head or her heels. As Thor and Tyr were looking at her trying to discover this, a woman came out of the giant's home quite as lovely as the giantess was hideous. She greeted them on the threshold. Her golden hair fell thick upon her shoulders; her mild eyes shone upon them; and with words of welcome she held out her hands and led them into the cavern. There she offered them meat and drink, and bade them rest until her husband, Hymir, should come home. As the darkness came on, however, and the time of his expected return drew near, she became silent and anxious; and at last she said, "I am very much afraid that my husband will be angry if he sees strangers here when he comes in. Take my advice, now, Asa Thor and Asa Tyr, 30 and hide behind one of these pillars in the rock. My lord, I assure you, is surely some-

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times, and not nearly so hospitable as I could wish."

"We are not accustomed to hide ourselves," remarked Thor.

"But you shall come forth when I call you," answered the woman.

So the *Æsir* did as she desired. By-and-bye they heard heavy footsteps far off, over the frozen sea, coming nearer and nearer every moment. The distant icebergs resounded, and at last Hymir ¹⁰ burst open the door of his cavern, and stalked angrily in. He had been unsuccessful that day in the chase, his hands were frost-bitten, and a "hard-frozen wood stood upon his cheek."

As soon as the fair-browed woman saw what mood he was in she went gently towards him, placed her hand in his, and told him of the arrival of the guests; then, with a sweet smile and voice, she entreated him to receive the strangers kindly, and entertain them hospitably. ²⁰

Hymir made no answer; but, at one glance of his eye towards the place where the *Æsir* were hidden, the pillar burst asunder, and the cross-beam which it supported fell with a crash to the ground. Eight ponderous kettles had been hanging on the beam, and all but one were shivered to atoms.

Thor and Tyr then stepped forth into the middle of the hall, and Hymir received them civilly, after which he turned his attention to ³⁰ supper; and, having cooked three whole oxen, he

invited the *Æsir* to eat with him. Thor fell to work with great relish, and when he had eaten the whole of one ox, prepared to cut a slice out of another.

"You eat a great deal," said Hymir, sulkily, but Thor was still very hungry, and went on with his supper until he had eaten two entire oxen. Then said Hymir, "Another night, Ving-Thor, you must provide your own supper; for I can't undertake to keep so expensive a guest."

Accordingly, early the next morning, Hymir prepared to go out fishing, and offered Thor a place in his boat. On their way to the shore they passed a herd of oxen feeding.

"Have you provided a bait for me?" said Thor to the giant.

"You must get one for yourself," answered Hymir, surlily.

So Thor was obliged to cut off the head of one of the oxen for a bait.

"You'll never be able to carry *that* head," said Hymir; for, in truth, the ox to which it had belonged was an enormous animal, called "Heaven Breaking."

But Thor made nothing of the head, slung it over his shoulder, and carried it down to the boat. As they got under weigh, Thor and Hymir each took an oar; but Thor pulled so fast, and with such mighty strokes, that the giant was obliged to stop for breath, and beg that they might go no further.

"We have already reached the spot," he said, "where I always catch the finest whales."

"But I want to go further out to sea," said Thor.

"That will be dangerous, Ving-Thor," said Hymir; "for if we row any further we shall come to the waters under which Jörmungand lies."

Thor laughed, and rowed on. At last he stopped, baited his hook with the ox's head, and cast the line out into the sea, whilst Hymir leant to over the other side of the boat, and caught two whales.

Now, when the great Jörmungand smelt Thor's bait he opened wide his monstrous jaws, and eagerly sucked in both head, and hook, and line; but no sooner did he feel the pain than he struggled so fiercely, and plunged so wildly, that Thor's hands were in an instant dashed against the sides of the boat. Still Thor did not lose his hold, but went on pulling with such wondrous force that his feet burst through the boat, and rested on the slippery rocks beneath. At last the venomous monster's mountain-high head was hauled above the waves, and then, indeed, it was a dreadful sight to see Thor, in all the power of his god-like strength, casting his fiery looks on the serpent, and the serpent glaring upon him, and spitting forth poisoned venom. Even Hymir's sun-burnt cheek changed colour as he beheld beneath his feet the sinking boat, and at his side to the deadliest monster of the deep. At last, in the

wildness of his fear, he rushed before Thor, and cut his line in sunder. Immediately the serpent's head began to sink ; but Thor hurled Miölnir with fearful force after it into the waters.

Then did the rocks burst ; it thundered through the caverns ; old mother earth all shrank ; even the fishes sought the bottom of the ocean ; but the serpent sank back, with a long, dull sound, beneath the waves, a deep wound in his head, and smothered vengeance in his heart.

Ill at ease and silent, Hymir then turned to go home, and Thor followed him, carrying boat and oars, and everything else, on his shoulders. Now, every fresh sight of Thor increased the giant's envy and rage ; for he could not bear to think that he had shown so little courage before his brave guest, and, besides, losing his boat and getting so desperately wet in his feet by wading home through the sea, did not by any means improve his temper. When they got home, therefore, and were supping together, he began jeering and taunting Thor.

"No doubt, Asa Thor," he said, "you think yourself a good rower and a fine fisher, though you did not catch anything to-day ; but can you break that drinking-cup before you, do you think ?"

Thor seized the cup, and dashed it against an upright stone. But, lo ! the stone was shattered in pieces, and the cup unbroken. Again, with greater strength, he hurled the cup against

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the pillars in the rock : it was still without a crack.

Now, it happened that the beautiful woman was sitting spinning at her wheel just behind where Thor was standing. From time to time she chanted snatches of old runes and sagas in soft tones ; and now, when Thor stood astonished that the cup was not broken, the woman's voice fell on his ear, singing low the following words :—

20

" Hard the pillar, hard the stone,
Harder yet the giant's bone.
Stones shall break and pillars fall ;
Hymir's forehead breaks them all."

Then Thor once more took the cup, and hurled it against the giant's forehead. The cup was this time shivered to pieces ; but Hymir himself was unhurt, and cried out, " Well done at last, Ving-Thor ; but can you carry that mile-deep kettle out of my hall, think you ? "

Tyr tried to lift it, and could not even raise the 20 handle.

Then Thor grasped it by the rim, and, as he did so, his feet pressed through the floor. With a mighty effort he lifted it ; he placed it on his head, while the rings rang at his feet ; and so in triumph he bore off the kettle, and set out again for Ægir's Hall.

After journeying a little way he chanced to look round, and then he saw that a host of many-headed giants, with Hymir for their leader, were 30

thronging after him. From every cavern, and iceberg, and jagged peak some hideous monster grinned and leered as a great wild beast waiting for his prey.

"Treachery!" cried Thor, as he raised Miölnir above his head, and hurled it three times among the giants.

In an instant they stood stiff, and cold, and dead, in rugged groups along the shore; one with his arm raised; another with his head stretched out; some upright, some crouching; each in the position he had last assumed. And there still they stand, petrified by ages into giant rocks; and, still pointing their stony fingers at each other, they tell the mighty tale of Thor's achievements, and the wondrous story of their fate.

"Pass round the foaming mead," cried King Ægir, as Thor placed "Mile-deep" on the table; and this time it happened that there was enough ~~so~~ for every one.

FREY'S WOOING.

CHAPTER I.

Van Frey, the light-hearted Summer King. The Vision from Air-Throne. A Change in the King of the Elves. The Giant-maiden with snowy arms the only remedy. Skirnir sets off to Jötunheim.

VAN FREY was the King of summer and school-master of all the little light elves. At his approach, drawn by his boar, Golden Bristles, the flowers blossomed and the fruits ripened. But Frey was not content, he longed to sit on Father Odin's Air-Throne, and see all worlds at one glance. At last his desire conquered him, and one evening he mounted All-Father's very seat and looked out over all the earth. And one far-off sight caught his eye. Away beyond Manheim ¹⁰ he saw a tall house standing on a hill in the very middle of Jötunheim. While he looked at it a maiden came and lifted up her arms to undo the latch of the door. It was dusk in Jötunheim ; but when this maiden lifted up her white arms, such a

dazzling reflection came from them, that Jötunheim, and the sky, and all the sea were flooded with clear light. For a moment everything could be distinctly seen ; but Frey saw nothing but the face of the maiden with the uplifted arms ; and when she had entered the house and shut the door after her, and darkness fell again on earth, and sky, and sea,—darkness fell, too, upon Frey's heart.

Now the next day Frey was sad, and his little subjects could not enliven him by their pranks.

Indeed, Frey had eyes for no one and ears only for the name of Gerda—the fairest of Giant-maidens, which was all he seemed to hear in the song of birds and rivers and trees. The kind old Niord at last sent Skirnir to enquire what his son's sorrow might be. Frey told the messenger that he could no longer live happily without Gerda, and yet he could not leave his kingdom for fear of the wicked giant, Ryme, coming and ruining all his summer work with snow and ice. Skirnir offered to go and fetch the maiden, if Frey would give him his enchanted sword. Frey consented to this bargain, and Skirnir prepared to set off on his journey ; but, before he left the hill, he chanced to see the reflection of Frey's face in a little pool of water that lay near. In spite of its sorrowful expression, it was as beautiful as the woods are in full summer, and a clever thought came into Skirnir's mind. He stooped down, without Frey's seeing him, and, with cunning touch, stole the picture out of the water ; then he fastened it up

carefully in his silver drinking-horn, and, hiding it in his mantle, he mounted his horse and rode towards Jötunheim, secure of succeeding in his mission, since he carried a matchless sword to conquer the giant, and a matchless picture to win the maiden.

CHAPTER II.

The Terrors of the way to Jötunheim. The Giant's House with Twenty Doors. The sweet Music of Skirnir's Voice. The Wooing of fairest Gerda. The Magical Portrait in the Drinking-horn.

SKIRNIR'S first day's journey was through the land of the Frost Giants, whose prickly touch kills, and whose breath is sharper than swords. Then they passed through the dwellings of the horse-headed ¹² and vulture-headed giants,—Monsters terrible to see. Skirnir hid his face, and the horse flew along swifter than the wind.

On the evening of the third day they reached Gymir's house. Skirnir rode round it nine times; but though there were twenty doors, he could find no entrance; for fierce three-headed dogs guarded every door-way.

At length he saw a herdsman pass near, and he rode up and asked him how it was possible ²⁰

for a stranger to enter Gymir's house, or get a sight of his fair daughter Gerd.

"Are you doomed to death, or are you already a dead man," answered the herdsman, "that you talk of seeing Gymir's fair daughter, or entering a house from which no one ever returns?"

"My death is fixed for one day," said Skirnir in answer, and his voice, the voice of an Asa, sounded loud and clear through the misty air of Jötunheim. It reached the ears of the fair Gerd as she sat in her chamber with her maidens.

"What is that noise of noises," she said, "that I hear? The earth shakes with it, and all Gymir's halls tremble."

Then one of the maidens got up, and peeped out of the window.

"I see a man," she said; "he has dismounted from his horse, and he is fearlessly letting it graze before the door."

"Go out and bring him in stealthily, then," said Gerd; "I must again hear him speak; for his voice is sweeter than the ringing of bells."

So the maiden rose and opened the house-door softly, lest the grim giant, Gymir, who was drinking mead in the banquet-hall with seven other giants, should hear and come forth.

Skirnir heard the door open, and understanding the maiden's sign, he entered with stealthy steps, and followed her to Gerd's chamber. As soon as he entered the doorway the light from her face

shone upon him, and he no longer wondered that Frey had given up his sword.

"Are you the son of an Asa, or an Alf, or of a wise Van?" asked Gerda; "and why have you come through flame and snow to visit our halls?"

Then Skirmir came forward and knelt at Gerda's feet, and gave his message, and spoke as he had promised to speak of Van Frey and of Alfheim.

Gerda listened; and it was pleasant enough to talk to her, looking into her bright face; but she ¹⁰ did not seem to understand much of what he said.

He promised to give her eleven golden apples from Idūna's grove if she would go with him, and that she should have the magic ring Draupnir from which every day a still fairer jewel fell. But he found there was no use talking of beautiful things to one who had never in all her life seen anything beautiful.

Gerda smiled at him as a child smiles at a fairytale.

At length he grew angry. "If you are so ²⁰ childish, maiden," he said, "that you can believe only what you have seen, and have no thought of *Æsirland* or the *Æsir*, then sorrow and utter darkness shall fall upon you; you shall live alone on the Eagle Mount turned towards Hel. Terrors shall beset you; weeping shall be your lot. Men and *Æsir* will hate you, and you shall be doomed to live for ever with the Frost Giant, Ryme, in whose cold arms you will wither away like a thistle on a house-top."
³⁰

"Gently," said Gerda, turning away her bright

head, and sighing. "How am I to blame? you make such a talk of your *Æsir* and your *Æsir*; but how can I know about it when all my life long I have lived with giants?"

At these words, Skirnir rose as if he would have departed, but Gerda called him back.

"You must drink a cup of mead," she said, "in return for your sweet-sounding words."

Skirnir heard this gladly, for now he knew what he would do. He took the cup from her hand, drank off the mead, and, before he returned it, he contrived cleverly to pour in the water from his drinking-horn, on which Frey's image was painted; then he put the cup into Gerda's hand, and bade her look.

She smiled as she looked; and the longer she looked, the sweeter grew her smile; for she looked for the first time on a face that loved her, and many things became clear to her that she had never understood before. Skirnir's words were no longer like fairy tales. She could now believe in *Æsirland*, and in all beautiful things.

"Go back to your master," she said, at last, "and tell him that in nine days I will meet him in the warm wood Barri."

After hearing these joyful words, Skirnir made haste to take leave, for every moment that he lingered in the giant's house he was in danger. One of Gerda's maidens conducted him to the door, and he mounted his horse again, and rode from Jötunheim with a glad heart.

CHAPTER III.

Frey's impatience. The Wedding Preparations in Alfheim. The excitement of the Elves, and their Gifts. The Procession of the Æsir at the Wedding of Frey and Gerda in the Warm Wood, Barri.

WHEN Skirnir got back to Alfheim, and told Gerd's answer to Frey, he was disappointed to find that his master did not immediately look as bright and happy as he expected.

"Nine days!" he said; "but how can I wait nine days? One day is long, and three days are very long, but 'nine days' might as well be a whole year."

I have heard children say such things when one tells them to wait for a new toy. 10

Skirnir and old Niörd only laughed at it; but Freyja and all the ladies of Asgard made a journey to Alfheim, when they heard the story, to comfort Frey, and hear all the news about the wedding.

"Dear Frey," they said, "it will never do to lie still here, sighing under a tree. You are quite mistaken about the time being long; it is hardly long enough to prepare the marriage presents, and talk over the wedding. You have no idea how busy we are going to be, everything in Alfheim will 20 have to be altered a little."

At these words Frey really did lift up his head,

and wake up from his musings. He looked, in truth, a little frightened at the thought ; but, when all the Asgard ladies were ready to work for his wedding, how could he make any objection ? He was not allowed to have much share in the business himself ; but he had little time, during the nine days, to indulge in private thought, for never before was there such a commotion in Alfheim. The ladies found so many things that wanted overlooking, and the little light elves were not of the slightest use to any one. They forgot all their usual tasks, and went running about through groves and fields, and by the sedgy banks of rivers, peering into earth-holes, and creeping down into flower-cups and empty snail-shells, every one hoping to find a gift for Gerda.

Some stole the light from glow worms' tails, and wove it into a necklace, and others pulled the ruby spots from cowslip leaves, to set with jewels to the acorn cups that Gerda was to drink from ; while the swiftest runners chased the butterflies, and pulled feathers from their wings to make fans and bonnet-plumes.

All the work was scarcely finished when the ninth day came, and Frey set out from Alfheim with all his elves, to the warm wood Barri.

The *Æsir* joined him on the way, and they made, together, something like a wedding procession. First came Frey in his chariot, drawn by 30 Golden Bristles, and carrying in his hand the wedding-ring, which was none other than Draup-

nir, the magic ring of which so many stories are told.

Odin and Frigga followed with their wedding-gift, the Ship Skidbladnir, in which all the *Æsir* could sit and sail, though it could afterwards be folded up so small, that you might carry it in your hand.

Then came Idūna, with eleven golden apples in a basket on her fair head, and then two and two all the heroes and ladies with their gifts. 10

All round them flocked the elves, toiling under the weight of their offerings. It took twenty little people to carry one gift, and yet there was not one so large as a baby's finger. Laughing, and singing, and dancing, they entered the warm wood, and every summer flower sent a sweet breath after them. Everything on earth smiled on the wedding-day of Frey and Gerda.

THE WANDERINGS OF FREYJA.

CHAPTER I.

*Freyja, the wife of Odur, and luckiest of women.
Her longing for an ornament. Her wanderings
in Svartheim. The dazzling Necklace of the
Dwarfs. Odur is gone.*

FREYJA, the beautiful young Vana, sister of Frey, lived in Asgard in her palace of Folkvang, with its fair hall—the Roomy-seated. Her wonderful young husband, Odur the Immortal, was so enchanting that Freyja would sometimes boast of her happiness being beyond that of all others. Now one day it chanced that guests were coming to Valhalla to dine with Odin, and Freyja and her husband were invited too. Freyja, not content with her matchless beauty, pined for some ornament. So, in spite of all Odur could say, she wandered off to try and persuade Frey to give her one. But she could not find Frey. Indeed she lost herself, and her steps went downward, downward, away from Alfheim to the cavern of four dwarfs.

“Where am I?” said Freyja to herself, as she



freyja in the dwarf's cave

at last lost the light of day, and went down, wandering on deeper and deeper between the high walls, and under the firm roof of rock. "Why, surely this must be Svartheim ; and yet it is not unpleasant, nor quite dark here, though the sun is not shining."

And in truth it was not dark ; for, far on before her, winding in and out through the cavern's innermost recesses, were groups of little men, who had each a lantern in his cap and a pickaxe in his hand ; and they were working hard, digging for diamonds, which they piled up the walls, and hung across the roof in white and rose-coloured coronets, marvellously glittering.

Four clever little dwarf-chiefs were there directing the labours of the rest ; but, as soon as they caught sight of Freyja, they sat down in the centre of the cavern, and began to work diligently at something which they held between them, bending over it with strange chattering and grimaces. Freyja felt very curious to see what it was ; but her eyes were so dazzled with the blaze of diamonds and lanterns, that she was obliged to go nearer in order to distinguish it clearly. Accordingly, she walked on to where the four dwarfs were sitting, and peeped over their shoulders. Oh ! brilliant ! exquisitely worked ! bewildering !

Freyja drew back again with almost blinded eyes ; for she had looked upon the necklace Brisingamen, and at the same moment a passionate wish burst forth in her heart to have it for her own,

to wear it in Valhalla, to wear it always round her own fair neck. "Life to me," said Freyja, "is no longer worth having without Brisingamen." Then the dwarfs held it out to her, but also looked cunningly at one another as they did so, and burst into a laugh so loud that it rang through the vaulted caverns, echoed and echoed back again from side to side, from dwarf to dwarf, from depth to depth.

10 Freyja, however, only turned her head a little on one side, stretched out her hand, grasped the necklace with her small fingers, and then ran out of the cavern as quickly as ever she could, up again to the green hill-side. There she sat down and fitted the brilliant ornament about her neck, after which she looked a little shyly at the reflection of herself in a still pool that was near, and turned homewards with an exulting heart. She felt certain that all was well with her; nevertheless, all was not well, but very miserable indeed. When Freyja was come back to Asgard again, and to her palace of Folkvang, she sought her own private apartments, that she might see Odur alone, and make him admire her necklace Brisingamen. But Odur was not there. She searched in every room, hither and thither; but alas! he was not to be found in any room or any hall in all the palace of Folkvang. Freyja searched for him in every place; she walked restlessly about, in and 30 out, among the places of the "Roomy Seated." She peered wistfully, with sad eyes, in the face of

every guest ; but the only face she cared to see, she never saw.

Odur was gone, gone back for ever to the home of the Immortals. Brisingamen and Odur could not live together in the palace of Folkvang. But Freyja did not know this ; she did not know why Odur was gone, nor where he was gone ; she only saw he was not there, and she wrung her hands sadly, and watered her jewels with salt, warm tears.

As she sat thus and mourned in the entrance to her palace, all the ladies of Asgard passed by on their way to Valhalla, and looked at her. Some said one thing, some another ; but no one said anything at all encouraging, or much to the purpose. Frigga passed by last of all, and she raised her head with a little severe shake, saying something about beauty, and pride, and punishment, which sank down so deeply into the heart of the sorrow-stricken young Vana that she got up with a desperate resolution, and, presenting herself to before the throne of Asa Odin, spoke to him thus : " Father of Æsir, listen to my weeping, and do not turn away from me with a cruel frown. I have searched through my palace of Folkvang, and all through the city of Asgard, but nowhere is Odur the Immortal to be found. Let me go, Father Odin, I beseech you, and seek him far and near, across the earth, through the air, over the sea, even to the borders of Jötunheim."

And Odin answered, " Go, Freyja, and good fortune go with you."

Then Freyja sprang into her swift, soft-rolling chariot, which was drawn by two cats, waved her hand as she rose over the city, and was gone.

CHAPTER II.

Freyja roams over the earth, seeking her matchless husband, in palace and hut, by land and sea. The weight of Brisingamen and the loss of Immortal Love. The Song of the Sea-King's Daughters: "Odur will never return, nor Freyja forget to weep."

THE cats champed their bright bits, and skimmed alike over earth and air with swift, clinging steps, eager and noiseless. The chariot rolled on, and Freyja was carried away up and down into every part of the world, weeping golden tears wherever she went; they fell down from her pale cheeks, and rippled away behind her in little sunshiny rivers, that carried beauty and weeping to every land. She came to the greatest city in the world, and drove down its wide streets.

"But none of the houses here are good enough for Odur," said Freyja to herself; "I will not ask for him at such doors as these."

So she went straight on to the palace of the king.

"Is Odur in this palace?" she asked of the

gate-keeper. "Is Odur, the Immortal, living with the king?"

But the gate-keeper shook his head, and assured her that his master had never even heard of such a person.

Then Freyja turned away, and knocked at many other stately doors, asking for Odur; but no one in all that great city so much as knew her husband's name.

Then Freyja went into the long, narrow lanes to and shabby streets, where the poor people lived, but there it was all the same; every one said only, "No—not here," and stared at her.

In the night time Freyja went quite away from the city, and the lanes, and the cottages, far off to the side of a lake, where she lay down and looked over into the water.

By-and-bye the moon came and looked there too, and the Queen of Night saw a calm face in the water, serene and high; but the Queen of Beauty saw a troubled face, frail and fair.

Brisingamen was reflected in the water too, and its rare colours flashed from the little waves. Freyja was pleased at the sight of her favourite ornament, and smiled even in the midst of her tears; but as for the moon, instead of Brisingamen, the deep sky and the stars were around her.

At last Freyja slept by the side of the lake, and then a dark shape crept up the bank on which she was lying, sat down beside her, and took her fair head between its hands. It was

Loki, and he began to whisper into Freyja's ear as she slept.

" You were quite right, Freyja," he said, " to go out and try to get something for yourself in Svartheim, instead of staying at home with your husband. It was very wise of you to care more for your dress and your beauty than for Odur. You went down into Svartheim, and found Brisingamen. Then the Immortal went away; but is not Brisingamen better than he? Why do you cry, Freyja? Why do you start so?"

Freyja turned, moaning, and tried to lift her head from between his hands; but she could not, and it seemed in her dream as if a terrible nightmare brooded over her.

" Brisingamen is dragging me down," she cried in her sleep, and laid her little hand upon the clasp without knowing what she was doing.

Then a great laugh burst forth in Svartheim, and came shuddering up through the vaulted caverns until it shook the ground upon which she lay. Loki started up, and was gone before Freyja had time to open her eyes.

It was morning, and the young Vana prepared to set out on her journey.

" Brisingamen is fair," she said, as she bade farewell to her image in the lake. " Brisingamen is fair; but I find it heavy sometimes."

After this, Freyja went to many cities, and towns, and villages, asking everywhere for Odur;

but there was not one in all the world who could tell her where he was gone.

At last she came to the wide sea-coast, and there everything was gloriously beautiful. It was evening, and the western sky looked like a broad crimson flower. No wind stirred the ocean, but the small waves rippled in rose-coloured froth on the shore, like the smiles of a giant at play.

Ægir, the old sea-king, supported himself on the sand, whilst the cool waters were laving his ¹⁰ breast, and his ears drank their sweet murmur; for nine waves were his beautiful daughters, and they and their father were talking together. Now, though Ægir looked so stormy and old, he was really as gentle as a child, and no mischief would ever have happened in his kingdom if he had been left to himself. But he had a cruel wife, called Ran, who was the daughter of a giant, and so eagerly fond of fishing that, whenever any of the rough winds came to call upon her husband, she ²⁰ used to steal out of the deep sea-caves where she lived, and follow ships for miles under the water, dragging her net after her, so that she might catch any one who fell overboard.

Freyja wandered along the shore towards the place where the Sea King was lying, and as she went she heard him speaking to his daughters.

"What is the history of Freyja?" he asked.

And the first wave answered,—

"Freyja is a fair young Vana, who once was ³⁰ happy in Asgard."

Then the second wave said,—

“ But she left her fair palace there, and Odur,
her Immortal Love.”

Third wave,—

“ She went down to the cavern of dwarfs.”

Fourth wave,—

“ She found Brisingamen there, and carried it
away with her.”

Fifth wave,—

10 “ But when she got back to Folkvang she found
that Odur was gone.”

Sixth wave,—

“ Because the Vana had loved herself more than
Immortal Love.”

Seventh wave,—

“ Freyja will never be happy again, for Odur
will never come back.”

Eighth wave,—

“ Odur will never come back as long as the
20 world shall last.”

Ninth wave,—

“ Odur will never return, nor Freyja forget to
weep.”

Freyja stood still, spell-bound, listening, and
when she heard the last words, that Odur would
never come back, she wrung her hands, and
cried,—

“ O, Father Ægir! trouble comes, comes surging
up from a wide sea, wave over wave, into my soul.”

30 And in truth it seemed as if her words had power
to change the whole surface of the ocean—wave

over wave rose higher and spoke louder—Ran was seen dragging her net in the distance—old Ægir shouted, and dashed into the deep—sea and sky mixed in confusion, and night fell upon the storm. Then Freyja sank down exhausted on the sand, where she lay until her kind daughter, the sleepy little Siosna, came and carried her home again in her arms. After this the beautiful Vana lived in her palace of Folkvang, with friends and sisters, Æsir and Asyniur, but Odur did not return, nor to Freyja forgot to weep.

IDŪNA'S APPLES.

CHAPTER I.

Idūna, the darling of Asgard. Her happiness with Bragi, the story-teller. The visitors who crowd her grove and eat her Apples—The never-failing store in the Golden Casket. The Black Bird of ill omen.

Of all the groves and gardens round the city of Asgard—and they were many and beautiful—there was none so beautiful as the one where Idūna, the wife of Bragi, lived. It stood on the south side of the hill, not far from Gladsheim, and it was called "Always Young," because nothing that grew there could ever decay, or become the least bit older than it was on the day when Idūna entered it. The trees wore always a tender, light green colour, as the hedges do in spring. The flowers were mostly half-opened, and every blade of grass bore always a trembling, glittering drop of early dew. Brisk little winds wandered about the grove, making the leaves dance from morning till night and swaying backwards and forwards the heads of the flowers.

"Blow away!" said the leaves to the wind, "for we shall never be tired."

"And you will never be old," said the winds in answer. And then the birds took up the chorus and sang,—

"Never tired and never old."

Idūna, the mistress of the grove, was fit to live among young birds, and tender leaves, and spring flowers. She was so fair that when she bent over the river to entice her swans to come to her, even to the stupid fish stood still in the water, afraid to destroy so beautiful an image by swimming over it; and when she held out her hand with bread for the swans to eat, you would not have known it from a water-lily—it was so wonderfully white.

Idūna never left her grove even to pay a visit to her nearest neighbour, and yet she did not lead by any means a dull life; for, besides having the company of her husband, Bragi, (who must have been an entertaining person to live with; for he is said to have known a story which never came to an end, and yet which never grew wearisome) all the heroes of Asgard made a point of coming to call upon her every day. It was natural enough that they should like to visit so beautiful a grove and so fair a lady; and yet, to confess the truth, it was not quite to see either the grove or Iduna that they came.

Idūna herself was well aware of this, and when her visitors had chatted a short time with her, she never failed to bring out from the innermost recess

of her bower a certain golden casket, and to request, as a favour, that her guests would not think of going away till they had tasted her apples, which, she flattered herself, had a better flavour than any other fruit in the world.

It would have been quite unlike a hero of Asgard to have refused such courtesy ; and, besides, Idūna was not as far wrong about her apples as hostesses generally are, when they boast of the ~~10~~ good things on their tables.

There is no doubt her apples *had* a peculiar flavour ; and if any one of the heroes happened to be a little tired, or a little out of spirits, or a little cross, when he came into the bower, it always followed that, as soon as he had eaten one apple, he found himself as fresh, and vigorous, and happy as he had ever been in his life.

So fond were the heroes of these apples, and so necessary did they think them to their daily comfort, that they never went on a journey without requesting Idūna to give them one or two, to fortify them against the fatigues of the way.

Idūna had no difficulty in complying with this request ; she had no fear of her store ever failing, for as surely as she took an apple from her casket another fell in ; but where it came from Idūna could never discover. She never saw it till it was close to the bottom of the casket ; but she always heard the sweet tinkling sound it made when it ~~30~~ touched the golden rim. It was as good as play to Idūna to stand by her casket, taking the apples



IDIUNA GIVING THE MAGIC APPLES.

out, and watching the fresh rosy ones come tumbling in, without knowing who threw them.

One spring morning Idūna was very busy taking apples out of her casket ; for several of the heroes were taking advantage of the fine weather to journey out into the world. Bragi was going from home for a time ; perhaps he was tired of telling his story only to Idūna, and perhaps she was beginning to know it by heart ; and Odin, Loki, and Hœnir had agreed to take a little tour in the direction ¹⁰ of Jötunheim, just to see if any entertaining adventure would befall them. When they had all received their apples, and taken a tender farewell of Iduna, the grove—green and fair as it was—looked, perhaps, a little solitary.

Idūna stood by her fountain, watching the bright water as it danced up into the air and quivered, and turned, and fell back, making a hundred little flashing circles in the river ; and then she grew tired, for once, of the light and the noise, and ²⁰ wandered down to a still place, where the river was shaded by low bushes on each side, and reflected clearly the blue sky overhead.

Idūna sat down and looked into the deep water. Besides her own fair face there were little, wandering, white clouds to be seen reflected there. She counted them as they sailed past. At length a strange form was reflected up to her from the water—large, dark, lowering wings, pointed claws, a head with fierce eyes—looking at her. ³⁰

Idūna started and raised her head. It was above

as well as below ; the same wings—the same eyes—the same head—looking down from the blue sky, as well as up from the water. Such a sight had never been seen near Asgard before ; and, while Idūna looked, the thing waved its wings, and went up, up, up, till it lessened to a dark spot in the clouds and on the river.

CHAPTER II

Odin's tour to inspect the world. The uncooked ox in the pot and the man-headed eagle in the tree. Odin sees through Thiassi's disguise. How did the false Loki escape from the Giant?

IN the meantime Odin, Loki, and Hœnir proceeded on their journey. They were not bound on any particular quest. They strayed hither and thither that Odin might see that things were going on well in the world, and his subjects comporting themselves in a becoming manner. Every now and then they halted while Odin inspected the thatching of a barn, or stood at the smithy to see how the smith wielded his hammer, or in a furrow to observe if the ploughman guided his ploughshare evenly through the soil. "Well done," he said if the workman was working with all his might ; and he turned away, leaving something behind him, a straw in the barn, a piece of old iron at the forge-door, a grain in the furrow—nothing to look at ;

but ever after the barn was always full, the forge-fire never went out, the field yielded bountifully.

Towards noon the *Æsir* reached a shady valley, and, feeling tired and hungry, Odin proposed to sit down under a tree, and while he rested and studied a book of runes which he had with him, he requested Loki and Hœnir to prepare some dinner.

Loki managed to steal pies as his share of the work, while Hœnir killed a wild ox, and stewed ¹⁰ some in a pot. When Hœnir declared that his meat had been stewing long enough, the *Æsir* all sat down near the fire, and Hœnir lifted up the lid of the pot. A thick steam rose up from it; but when he took out the meat it was as red and uncooked as when he first put it into the pot.

"Patience," said Hœnir; and Odin again took out his book of runes. Another hour passed, and Hœnir again took off the lid, and looked at the meat; but it was in precisely the same state as ²⁰ before. This happened several times, and even the cunning Loki was puzzled; when, suddenly, a strange noise was heard coming from a tree near, and, looking up, they saw an enormous human-headed eagle seated on one of the branches, and looking at them with two fierce eyes. When they looked it spoke.

"Give me my share of the feast," it said, "and the meat shall presently be done."

"Come down and take it—it lies before you," ³⁰ said Loki, while Odin looked on with thoughtful

eyes ; for he saw plainly that it was no mortal bird who had the boldness to claim a share in the *Æsir*'s food.

Undaunted by Odin's majestic looks, the eagle flew down, and, seizing a large piece of meat, was going to fly away with it, when Loki, thinking he had now got the bird in his power, took up a stick that lay near, and struck a hard blow on the eagle's back. The stick made a ringing sound as it fell ; but, when Loki tried to draw it back, he found that it stuck with extraordinary force to the eagle's back ; neither could he withdraw his own hands from the other end.

Something like a laugh came from the creature's half-human, half-bird-like mouth ; and then it spread its dark wings and rose up into the air, dragging Loki after.

"It is as I thought," said Odin, as he saw the eagle's enormous bulk brought out against the sky ; "it is Thiassi, the strongest giant in Jötunheim, who has presumed to show himself in our presence. Loki has only received the reward of his treachery, and it would ill-become us to interfere in his behalf ; but, as the monster is near, it will be well for us to return to Asgard, lest any misfortune should befall the city in our absence."

While Odin spoke, the winged creature had risen up so high as to be invisible even to the eyes of the *Æsir* ; and, during their return to Asgard, he did not again appear before them ; but, as they approached the gates of the city, they were sur-

prised to see Loki coming to meet them. He had a crestfallen and bewildered look ; and when they questioned him as to what had happened to him since they parted in such a strange way, he declared himself to be quite unable to give any further account of his adventures than that he had been carried rapidly through the air by the giant, and, at last, thrown down from a great height near the place where the *Æsir* met him.

Odin looked steadfastly at him as he spoke, ^{so} but he forbore to question him further : for he knew well that there was no hope of hearing the truth from Loki, and he kept within his own mind the conviction he felt that some disastrous result must follow a meeting between two such evil-doers as Loki and the giant Thiassi.

CHAPTER III.

Loki the Tempter and Idūna the Tempted. Idūna gives ear to a lying tale and leaves her grove. The reward of disobedience. Loki's forebodings.

IN the evening of the same day, when the *Æsir* were all feasting and telling stories to each other in the great hall of Valhalla, Loki stole out from Gladsheim, and went alone to visit Idūna in her ²⁰ grove. It was a still, bright evening. The leaves of the trees moved softly up and down, whispering

sweet words to each other ; the flowers, with half-shut eyes, nodded sleepily to their own reflections in the water, and Idūna sat by the fountain, with her head resting in one hand, thinking of pleasant things.

"It is all very well," thought Loki ; "but I am not the happier because people can here live such pleasant lives. It does not do me any good, or cure the pain I have had so long in my heart."

10 Loki's long shadow—for the sun was setting—fell on the water as he approached, and made Idūna start. She remembered the sight that had disturbed her so much in the morning ; but when she saw only Loki, she looked up and smiled kindly ; for he had often accompanied the other *Æsir* in their visits to her grove.

"I am wearied with a long journey," said Loki abruptly, "and I would eat one of your apples to refresh me after my fatigue." The casket stood 20 by Idūna's side, and she immediately put in her hand and gave Loki an apple. To her surprise, instead of thanking her warmly, or beginning to eat it, he turned it round and round in his hand with a contemptuous air.

"It is true then," he said, after looking intently at the apple for some time, "your apples are but small and withered in comparison. I was unwilling to believe it at first, but now I can doubt no longer."

30 "Small and withered!" said Idūna, rising hastily. Nay, Asa Odin himself, who has tra-

versed the whole world, assures me that he has never seen any to be compared to them."

"That will never be said again," returned Loki; "for this very afternoon I have discovered a tree, in a grove not far from Asgard, on which grow apples so beautiful that no one who has seen them will ever care again for yours."

"I do not wish to see or hear of them," said Idūna, trying to turn away with an indifferent air; but Loki followed her, and continued to speak more and more strongly of the beauty of this new fruit, hinting that Iduna would be sorry that she had refused to listen when she found all her guests deserting her for the new grove, and when even Bragi began to think lightly of her and of her gifts. At this Idūna sighed, and Loki came up close to her, and whispered in her ear,—

"It is but a short way from Asgard, and the sun has not yet set. Come out with me, and, before any one else has seen the apples, you shall gather them, and put them in your casket, and no woman shall ever have it in her power to boast that she can feast the *Æsir* more sumptuously than Iduna."

Now Idūna had often been cautioned by her husband never to let anything tempt her to leave the grove, and she had always been so happy here, that she thought there was no use in his telling her the same thing so often over; but now her mind was so full of the wonderfully beautiful fruit, and she felt such a burning wish to get it for

herself, that she quite forgot her husband's commands.

"It is only a little way," she said to herself ; "there can be no harm in going out just this once ;" and, as Loki went on urging her, she took up her casket from the ground hastily, and begged him to show her the way to this other grove. Loki walked very quickly, and Idūna had not time to collect her thoughts before she found herself at the entrance of Always Young. At the gate she would gladly have stopped a minute to take breath ; but Loki took hold of her hand, and forced her to pass through, though, at the very moment of passing, she half drew back ; for it seemed to her as if all the trees in the grove suddenly called out in alarm, "Come back, come back, Oh, come back, Idūna !" She half drew back her hand, but it was too late ; the gate fell behind her, and she and Loki stood together without the grove.

The trees rose up between them and the setting sun, and cast a deep shadow on the place where they stood ; a cold, night air blew on Idūna's cheek, and made her shiver.

"Let us hasten on," she said to Loki ; "let us hasten on, and soon come back again."

But Loki was not looking on, he was looking up. Idūna raised her eyes in the direction of his, and her heart died within her ; for there, high up over her head, just as she had seen it in the morning, hung the lowering, dark wings—the sharp

talons—the fierce head, looking at her. For one moment it stood still above her head, and then lower, lower, lower, the huge shadow fell ; and, before Idūn found breath to speak, the dark wings were folded round her, and she was borne high up in the air, northwards, towards the grey mist that hangs over Jötunheim. Loki watched till she was out of sight, and then returned to Asgard. The presence of the giant was no wonder to him ; for he had, in truth, purchased his own release by promising to deliver up Idūna and her casket into his power ; but, as he returned alone through the grove, a foreboding fear pressed on his mind.

" If it should be true," he thought, " that Idūna's apples have the wonderful power Odin attributes to them ! if I among the rest should suffer from the loss ! "

Occupied with these thoughts, he passed quickly among the trees, keeping his eyes resolutely fixed on the ground. He dare not trust himself to look around ; for once, when he had raised his head, he fancied that, gliding through the brushwood, he had seen the dark robes and pale face of his daughter Hela.

CHAPTER IV.

Sorrow in Asgard. The Fading of Idūna's Grove and the Ageing of Asgard's Heroes. An icy Visitor, half corpse, half queen. Bragi suggests a Remedy.

WHEN it was known that Idūna had disappeared from her grove, there were many sorrowful faces in Asgard, and anxious voices were heard inquiring for her. Loki walked about with as grave a face, and asked as many questions, as any one else ; but he had a secret fear that became stronger every day, that now, at last, the consequence of his evil ways would find him out.

Days passed on, and the looks of care, instead of wearing away, deepened on the faces of the *Æsir*. They met, and looked at each other, and turned away sighing ; each saw that some strange change was creeping over all the others, and none liked to be the first to speak of it. It came on very gradually—a little change every day, and no day ever passing without the change. The leaves of the trees in Idūna's grove deepened in colour. They first became a sombre green, then a glowing red, and, at last, a pale brown ; and when the brisk winds came and blew them about, they moved every day more languidly.

"Let us alone," they said at length. "We are tired, tired, tired."

The winds, surprised, carried the new sound to Gladsheim, and whispered it all round the banquet-hall where the *Æsir* sat, and then they rushed back again, and blew all through the grove.

"We are tired," said the leaves again ; "we are tired, we are old ; we are going to die ;" and at the word they broke from the trees one by one, and fluttered to the ground, glad to rest anywhere ; and the winds, having nothing else to do, went back to Gladsheim with the last strange word they had learned.

The *Æsir* were all assembled in Valhalla ; but there were no stories told, and no songs sung. No one spoke much but Loki, and he was that day in a talking humour. He moved from one to another, whispering an unwelcome word in every

"Have you noticed your mother Frigga ?" he said to Baldur. "Do you see how white her hair is growing, and what a number of deep lines are printed on her face ?"

Then he turned to Frey. "Look at your sister Freyja and your friend Baldur," he said, "as they sit opposite to us. What a change has come over them lately ! Who would think that that pale man and that faded woman were Baldur the beautiful and Freyja the fair ?"

"You are tired—you are old—you are going to die,"—moaned the winds, wandering all round the great halls, and coming in and out of the hundred doorways, and all the *Æsir* looked up

at the sad sound. Then they saw, for the first time, that a new guest had seated herself that day at the table of the *Æsir*. There could be no question of her fitness on the score of royalty, for a crown rested on her brow, and in her hand she held a sceptre; but the fingers that grasped the sceptre were white and fleshless, and under the crown looked the threatening face of Hela, half corpse, half queen.

10 A great fear fell on all the *Æsir* as they looked, and only Odin found voice to speak to her. "Dreadful daughter of Loki!" he said, "by what warrant do you dare to leave the kingdom where I permit you to reign, and come to take your place among the *Æsir*, who are no mates for such as you?"

Then Hela raised her bony finger, and pointed, one by one, to the guests that sat round. "White hair," she said, "wrinkled faces, weary limbs, dull 20 eyes—these are the warrants which have summoned me from the land of shadows to sit among the *Æsir*. I have come to claim you, by these signs, as my future guests, and to tell you that I am preparing a place for you in my kingdom."

At every word she spoke a gust of icy wind came from her mouth and froze the blood in the listeners' veins. If she had stayed a moment longer they would have stiffened into stone; but when she had spoken thus, she rose and left the 30 hall, and the sighing winds went out with her.

Then, after a long silence, Bragi stood up and

spoke. "Æsir," he said, "We are to blame. It is now many months since Idūn was carried away from us; we have mourned for her, but we have not yet avenged her loss. Since she left us a strange weariness and despair have come over us, and we sit looking on each other as if we had ceased to be warriors and Æsir. It is plain that, unless Idūn returns, we are lost. Let two of us journey to the Urda fount, which we have so long neglected to visit, and enquire of her from the Norns—for they know all things—and then, when we have learnt where she is, we will fight for her liberty, if need be, till we die; for that will be an end more fitting for us than to sit here and wither away under the breath of Hela."

At these words of Bragi, the Æsir felt a revival of their old strength and courage. Odin approved of Bragi's proposal, and decreed that he and Baldr should undertake the journey to the dwelling-place of the Norns. That very evening they set forth; for Hela's visit showed them that they had no time to lose.

It was a weary time to the dwellers in Asgard while they were absent. Two new citizens had taken up their abode in the city, Age and Pain. They walked the streets hand-in-hand, and there was no use in shutting the doors against them; for however closely the entrance was barred, the dwellers in the houses felt them as they passed.

CHAPTER V.

Odin reads the oracle—He who hides can find—Idūna in the Castle on the Rock. The Giants' touch on the Magic Apples. Another bird in Freyja's feathers. The flight of the Sparrow and the Falcon. The fire on the wall. Joy in Asgard.

AT length, Baldur and Bragi returned with the answer of the Norns, couched in mystic words, which Odin alone could understand. It revealed Loki's treacherous conduct to the \ae sur, and declared that Idūna could only be brought back by Loki, who must go in search of her, clothed in Freyja's garments of falcon feathers.

Loki was very unwilling to venture on such a search; but Thor threatened him with instant death if he refused to obey Odin's commands, or failed to bring back Idūna; and, for his own safety he was obliged to allow Freyja to fasten the falcon wings to his shoulders, and to set off towards Thiassi's castle in Jötunheim, where he well knew that Idūna was imprisoned.

It was called a castle; but it was, in reality, a hollow in a dark rock; the sea broke against two sides of it; and, above, the sea-birds clamoured day and night.

There the giant had taken Idūna on the night on which she had left her grove; and, fearing lest

Odin should spy her from Air Throne, he had shut her up in a gloomy chamber, and strictly forbidden her ever to come out. It was hard to be shut up from the fresh air and sunshine ; and yet, perhaps, it was safer for Idūn than if she had been allowed to wander about Jötunheim, and see the monstrous sights that would have met her there.

She saw nothing but Thiassi himself and his servants, whom he had commanded to attend upon to her ; and they, being curious to see a stranger from a distant land, came in and out many times every day.

They were fair, Idūna saw—fair and smiling ; and, at first, it relieved her to see such pleasant faces round her, when she had expected something horrible.

“Pity me !” she used to say to them ; “pity me ! I have been torn away from my home and my husband, and I see no hope of ever getting ~~so~~ back.” And she looked earnestly at them ; but their pleasant faces never changed, and there was always—however bitterly Idūn might be weeping—the same smile on their lips.

At length Idūna, looking more narrowly at them, saw, when they turned their backs to her, that they were hollow behind ; they were, in truth, Ellewomen, who have no hearts, and can never pity any one.

After Idūna saw this she looked no more at ~~so~~ their smiling faces, but turned away her head and

wept silently. It is very sad to live among Ellewomen when one is in trouble.

Every day the giant came and thundered at Idūna's door. "Have you made up your mind yet," he used to say, "to give me the apples? Something dreadful will happen to you if you take much longer to think of it." Idūna trembled very much every day, but still she had strength to say, "No;" for she knew the *most* dreadful thing would be for her to give to a wicked giant the gifts that had been entrusted to her for the use of the *Æsir*. The giant would have taken the apples by force if he could; but, whenever he put his hand into the casket, the fruit slipped from beneath his fingers, shrivelled into the size of a pea, and hid itself in crevices of the casket where his great fingers could not come—only when Idūna's little white hand touched it, it swelled again to its own size, and this she would never do while the giant was with her. So the days passed on, and Idūna would have died of grief among the smiling Ellewomen if it had not been for the moaning sound of the sea and the wild cry of the birds; "for, however others may smile, these pity me," she used to say, and it was like music to her.

One morning when she knew that the giant had gone out, and when the Ellewomen had left her alone, she stood for a long time at her window by the sea, watching the mermaids floating up and down on the waves, and looking at heaven with their sad blue eyes. She knew that they were

mourning because they had no souls, and she thought within herself that even in prison it was better to belong to the *Æsir* than to be a mermaid or an Ellewoman, were they ever so free or happy.

While she was still occupied with these thoughts she heard her name spoken, and a bird with large wings flew in at the window, and, smoothing its feathers, stood upright before her. It was Loki in Freyja's garment of feathers, and he made her understand in a moment that he had come to set ^{to} her free, and that there was no time to lose. He told her to conceal her casket carefully in her bosom, and then he said a few words over her, and she found herself changed into a sparrow, with the casket fastened among the feathers of her breast.

Then Loki spread his wings once more, and flew out of the window, and Idūna followed him. The sea-wind blew cold and rough, and her little wings fluttered with fear; but she struck them bravely out into the air and flew like an arrow ^{zo} over the water.

"This way lies Asgard," cried Loki, and the word gave her strength. But they had not gone far when a sound was heard above the sea, and the wind, and the call of the sea-birds. Thiassi had put on his eagle plumage, and was flying after them. For five days and five nights the three flew over the water that divides Jotunheim from Asgard, and at the end of every day, they were closer together, for the giant was gaining on the ^{zo} other two.

All the five days the dwellers in Asgard stood on the walls of the city watching. On the sixth evening they saw a falcon and a sparrow, closely pursued by an eagle, flying towards Asgard.

"There will not be time," said Bragi, who had been calculating the speed at which they flew. "The eagle will reach them before they can get into the city."

But Odin desired a fire to be lighted upon the walls ; and Thor and Tyr, with what strength remained to them, tore up the trees from the groves and gardens, and made a rampart of fire all round the city. The light of the fire showed Idūna her husband and her friends waiting for her. She made one last effort, and, rising high up in the air above the flames and smoke, she passed the walls, and dropped down safely at the foot of Odin's throne. The giant tried to follow ; but, wearied with his long flight, he was unable to raise his enormous bulk sufficiently high in the air. The flames scorched his wings as he flew through them, and he fell among the flaming piles of wood, and was burnt to death.

How Idūna feasted the *Æsir* on her apples, how they grew young and beautiful again, and how spring, and green leaves, and music came back to the grove, I must leave you to imagine, for I have made my story long enough already ; and if I say any more you will fancy that it is Bragi who has come among you, and that he has entered on his endless story.

BALDUR'S DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

Baldur dreams a Dream—The Shadow of Death. The Promise of all created and uncreated things. Odin and the dead Prophetess. A Bed is preparing in Helheim. The Ransom of Baldur the Beloved.

UPON a summer's afternoon it happened that Baldur the Bright and Bold, beloved of men and *Æsir*, found himself alone in his palace of Broadblink. Thor was walking low down among the valleys, his brow heavy with summer heat ; Frey and Gerda sported on still waters in their cloud-leaf ship ; Odin, for once, slept on the top of Air Throne ; a noon-day stillness pervaded the whole earth ; and Baldur in Broadblink, the wide-glancing most sunlit of palaces, dreamed a dream. ¹⁰

Now the dream of Baldur was troubled. He knew not whence nor why ; but when he awoke he found that a most new and weighty care was within him. It was so heavy that Baldur could scarcely carry it, and yet he pressed it closely to his heart, and said, "Lie there, and do not fall on

any one but me." Then he rose up, and walked out from the expanded splendour of his hall, that he might seek his own mother, Frigga, and tell her what had happened to him. He found her in her crystal saloon, calm and kind, waiting to listen, and ready to sympathise; so he walked up to her, his hands pressed closely on his heart, and lay down at her feet sighing.

"What is the matter, dear Baldur?" asked ¹⁰ Frigga, gently.

"I do not know, mother," answered he. "I do not know what the matter is; but I have a shadow in my heart."

"Take it out, then, my son, and let me look at it," replied Frigg.

"But I fear, mother, that if I do it will cover the whole earth."

Then Frigga laid her hand upon the heart of her son that she might feel the shadow's shape. ²⁰ Her brow became clouded as she felt it; her parted lips grew pale, and she cried out, "Oh! Baldur, my beloved son! the shadow is the shadow of death!"

Then said Baldur, "I will die bravely, my mother."

But Frigga answered, "You shall not die at all; for I will not sleep to-night until everything on earth has sworn to me that it will neither kill nor harm you."

³⁰ So Frigga stood up, and called to her everything on earth that had power to hurt or slay.

First she called all metals to her ; and heavy iron-ore came lumbering up the hill into the crystal hall, brass and gold, copper, silver, lead, and steel, and stood before the Queen, who lifted her right-hand high in the air, saying, "Swear to me that you will not injure Baldur ;" and they all swore, and went. Then she called to her all stones ; and huge granite came with crumbling sand-stone, and white lime, and the round, smooth stones of the sea-shore, and Frigga raised her arm, saying, 10 "Swear that you will not injure Baldur ;" and they swore, and went. Then Frigga called to her the trees ; and wide-spreading oak-trees, with tall ash and sombre firs came rushing up the hill, with long branches, from which green leaves like flags were waving, and Frigga raised her hand, and said, "Swear that you will not hurt Baldur ;" and they said, "We swear," and went. After this Frigga called to her the diseases, who came blown thitherward by poisonous winds on wings of pain, and to 20 the sound of moaning. Frigga said to them, "Swear :" and they sighed, "We swear," then flew away. Then Frigga called to her all beasts, birds, and venomous snakes, who came to her and swore, and disappeared. After this she stretched out her face, saying, "And now, my son, you cannot die."

But just then Odin came in, and when he had heard from Frigga the whole story, he looked even 30 more mournful than she had done ; neither did the

cloud pass from his face when he was told of the oaths that had been taken.

"Why do you still look so grave, my lord?" demanded Frigg, at last. "Baldur cannot now die."

But Odin asked very gravely, "Is the shadow gone out of our son's heart, or is it still there?"

"It cannot be there," said Frigg, turning away her head resolutely, and folding her hands before her.

But Odin looked at Baldur, and saw how it was. The hands pressed to the heavy heart, the beautiful brow grown dim. Then immediately he arose, saddled Sleipnir, his eight-footed steed, mounted him, and, turning to Frigga, said, "I know of a dead Vala, Frigg, who, when she was alive, could tell what was going to happen; her grave lies at the east side of Helheim, and I am going there to awake her, and ask whether any terrible grief is ~~so~~ really coming upon us."

So saying Odin shook the bridle in his hand, and the Eight-footed, with a bound, leapt forth, rushed like a whirlwind down the mountain of Asgard, and then dashed into a narrow defile between rocks.

Sleipnir went on through the defile a long way, until he came to a place where the earth opened her mouth. There Odin rode in and down a broad, steep, slanting road which led him to the ~~so~~ cavern Gnipa, and the mouth of the cavern Gnipa yawned upon Niflheim. Then thought Odin

to himself, "My journey is already done." But just as Sleipnir was about to leap through the jaws of the pit, Garm, the voracious dog who was chained to the rock, sprang forward, and tried to fasten himself upon Odin. Three times Odin shook him off, and still Garm, as fierce as ever, went on with the fight. At last Sleipnir leapt, and Odin thrust just at the same moment; then horse and rider cleared the entrance, and turned eastward toward the dead Vala's grave, dripping ¹⁰ blood along the road as they went; while the beaten Garm stood baying in the cavern's mouth.

When Odin came to the grave he got off his horse, and stood with his face northwards looking through barred enclosures into the city of Helheim itself. The servants of Hela were very busy there making preparations for some new guests—hanging gilded couches with curtains of anguish and splendid misery upon the walls. Then Odin's heart died within him and he began to repeat ²⁰ mournful runes in a low tone to himself.

The dead Vala turned heavily in her grave at the sound of his voice, and, as he went on, sat bolt upright. "What man is this," she asked, "who dares disturb my sleep?"

Then Odin, for the first time in his life, said what was not true; the shadow of Baldur dead fell upon his lips, and he made answer, "My name is Vegtam, the son of Valtam."

"And what do you want from me?" asked the ³⁰ Vala.

"I want to know," replied Odin, "for whom Hela is making ready that gilded couch in Helheim?"

"That is for Baldur the Beloved," answered the dead Vala. "Now go away, and let me sleep again, for my eyes are heavy."

But Odin said, "Only one word more. Is Baldur going to Helheim?"

"Yes, I've told you that he is," answered the Vala.

"Will he never come back to Asgard again?"

"If everything on earth should weep for him," answered she, "he will go back; if not, he will remain in Helheim."

Then Odin covered his face with his hands, and looked into darkness.

"Do go away," said the Vala, "I'm so sleepy; I cannot keep my eyes open any longer."

But Odin raised his head, and said again, "Only tell me this one thing. Just now, as I looked into darkness, it seemed to me as if I saw one on earth who would not weep for Baldur. Who was it?"

At this the Vala grew very angry and said, "How couldst *thou* see in darkness? I know of only one who, by giving away his eye, gained light. No Vegtam art thou, but Odin, chief of men."

At her angry words Odin became angry too, and called out as loudly as ever he could, "No Vala art thou, nor wise woman, but rather the mother of three giants."

"Go, go!" answered the Vala, falling back in her grave; "no man shall waken me again until Loki have burst his chains and Ragnarök be come." After this Odin mounted the Eight-footed once more, and rode thoughtfully towards home.

CHAPTER II.

The Games on the Peacestead. Baldur unscathed by arrow or dart. The jealousy and rage of Loki. Frigga has a Visitor. The least of all Herbs. A Brother's aim. Who guided blind Hödur's arm?

WHEN Odin came back to Asgard, Hermod took the bridle from his father's hand, and told him that the rest of the *Æsir* were gone to the Peacestead—a broad, green plain which lay just outside the city. Now this was, in fact, the playground of the *Æsir*, where they practised trials of skill one with another, and held tournaments and sham fights. These last were always conducted in the gentlest and most honourable manner; for the strongest law of the Peacestead was, that no angry blow should be struck, or spiteful word spoken, upon the sacred field; and for this reason some have thought it might be well if children also had a Peacestead to play in.

Odin was too much tired by his journey from Helheim to go to the Peacestead that afternoon;

so he turned away, and shut himself up in his palace of Gladsheim. But when he was gone, Loki came into the city by another way, and hearing from Hermod where the *Æsir* were, set off to join them.

When he got to the Peacestead, Loki found that the *Æsir* were standing round in a circle shooting at something, and he peeped between the shoulders of two of them to find out what it was. To his surprise he saw Baldur standing in the midst, erect and calm, whilst his friends and brothers were aiming their weapons at him. Some hewed at him with their swords—others threw stones at him—some shot arrows pointed with steel, and Thor continually swung Miölnir at his head. "Well," said Loki to himself, "if this is the sport of Asgard, what must that of Jötunheim be? I wonder what Father Odin and Mother Frigg would say if they were here?" But as Loki still looked, he became even more surprised, for the sport went on, and Baldur was not hurt. Arrows aimed at his very heart glanced back again untinged with blood. The stones fell down from his broad bright brow, and left no bruises there. Swords clave, but did not wound him; Miölnir struck him, and he was not crushed. At this Loki grew perfectly furious with envy and hatred. "And why is Baldur to be so honoured," said he, "that even steel and stone shall not hurt him?" Then Loki changed himself into a little, dark, bent, old woman, with a stick in his hand, and

hobbled away from the Peacestead to Frigga's cool saloon. At the door he knocked with his stick.

"Come in!" said the kind voice of Frigg, and Loki lifted the latch.

Now when Frigga saw, from the other end of the hall, a little, bent, crippled, old woman, come hobbling up her crystal floor, she got up with true queenliness, and met her half way, holding out her hand and saying in the kindest manner, "Pray sit down, my poor old friend; for it seems to me that you have come from a great way off."

"That I have, indeed," answered Loki in a tremulous, squeaking voice.

"And did you happen to see anything of the *Æsir*," asked Frigg, "as you came?"

"Just now I passed by the Peacestead, and saw them at play."

"What were they doing?"

"Shooting at Baldur."

Then Frigg bent over her work with a pleased smile on her face. "And nothing hurt him?" she said.

"Nothing," answered Loki, looking keenly at her.

"No, nothing," murmured Frigg, still looking down and speaking half musingly to herself; "for all things have sworn to me that they will not."

"Sworn!" exclaimed Loki, eagerly; "what is that you say? Has everything sworn then?"

"Everything," answered she, "excepting, indeed, the little shrub mistletoe, which grows, you know,

on the west side of Valhal, and to which I said nothing, because I thought it was too young to swear."

"Excellent!" thought Loki; and then he got up.

"You're not going yet, are you?" said Frigg, stretching out her hand and looking up at last into the eyes of the old woman.

"I'm quite rested now, thank you," answered Loki in his squeaky voice, and then he hobbled out at the door, which clapped after him, and sent a cold gust into the room. Frigga shuddered, and thought that a serpent was gliding down the back of her neck.

When Loki had left the presence of Frigg, he changed himself back to his proper shape, and went straight to the west side of Valhal, where the mistletoe grew. Then he opened his knife, and cut off a large branch, saying these words, "Too young for Frigga's oaths, but not too weak for Loki's work." After which he set off for the Peacestead once more, the mistletoe in his hand. When he got there he found that the *Æsir* were still at their sport, standing round, taking aim, and talking eagerly, and Baldur did not seem tired.

But there was one who stood alone, leaning against a tree, and who took no part in what was going on. This was Hôdur, Baldur's blind twin-brother; he stood with his head bent downwards, silent, whilst the others were speaking, doing nothing when they were most eager; and Loki

thought that there was a discontented expression on his face, just as if he were saying to himself, "Nobody takes any notice of me." So Loki went up to him, and put his hand upon his shoulder.

"And why are you standing here all alone, my brave friend?" said he. "Why don't *you* throw something at Baldur. Hew at him with a sword, or show him some attention of that sort."

"I haven't got a sword," answered Hödur, with an impatient gesture; "and you know as well as ¹⁰ I do, Loki, that Father Odin does not approve of my wearing warlike weapons, or joining in sham fights, because I am blind."

"Oh! is that it?" said Loki. "Well, I only know *I* shouldn't like to be left out of everything. However, I've got a twig of mistletoe here which I'll lend you if you like; a harmless little twig enough, but I shall be happy to guide your arm if you would like to throw it, and Baldur might take it as a compliment from his twin-brother." ²⁰

"Let me feel it," said Hödur, stretching out his uncertain hands.

"This way, this way, my dear friend," said Loki, giving him the twig. "Now, as hard as ever you can, to do *him honour*; throw!"

Hödur threw—Baldur fell, and the shadow of death covered the whole earth.

CHAPTER III.

The last Voyage of Ringhorn. Baldur's Burning far out to Sea. The Æsir in desolation. Hermod's Mission to the Queen of the Dead. The Tribute of Tears.

ONE after another they turned and left the Peacestead, those friends and brothers of the slain. One after another they turned and went towards the city ; crushed hearts, heavy footsteps, no word amongst them, a shadow upon all. The shadow was in Asgard too,—had walked through Frigga's hall, and seated itself upon the threshold of Gladheim. Odin had just come out to look at it, and Frigg stood by it in mute despair as the Æsir to came up.

“Loki did it ! Loki did it !” they said at last in confused, hoarse whispers, and they looked from one to another, upon Odin, upon Frigg, upon the shadow which they saw before them, and which they felt within. “Loki did it ! Loki, Loki !” they went on saying ; but it was no use repeating the name of Loki over and over again when there was another name they were too sad to utter which yet filled all their hearts—Baldr. Frigga said it ^{so} first, and then they all went to look at him lying down so peacefully on the grass—dead, dead.

“Carry him to the funeral pyre !” said Odin, at

length ; and four of the *Æsir* stooped down, and lifted their dead brother.

With scarcely any sound they carried the body tenderly to the sea-shore, and laid it upon the deck of that majestic ship called Ringhorn, which had been *his*. Then they stood round waiting to see who would come to the funeral. Odin came, and on his shoulders sat his two ravens, whose croaking drew clouds down over the Asa's face, for Thought and Memory sang one sad song that day. 10 Frigga came,—Frey, Gerda, Freyja, Thor, Hœnir, Bragi, and Idün. Heimdall came sweeping over the tops of the mountains on Golden Mane, his swift, bright steed. Ægir the Old groaned from under the deep, and sent his daughters up to mourn around the dead. Frost-giants and mountain-giants came crowding round the rimy shores of Jötunheim to look across the sea upon the funeral of an Asa. Nanna came, Baldur's fair young wife ; but when she saw the dead body of her 20 husband her own heart broke with grief, and the *Æsir* laid her beside him on the stately ship. After this Odin stepped forward, and placed a ring on the breast of his son, whispering something at the same time in his ear ; but when he and the rest of the *Æsir* tried to push Ringhorn into the sea before setting fire to it, they found that their hearts were so heavy they could lift nothing. So they beckoned to the giantess Hyrrokin to come over from Jötunheim and help them. She, with a 30 single push, set the ship floating, and then, whilst

Thor stood up holding Miðnir high in the air, Odin lighted the funeral pile of Baldur and of Nanna.

So Ringhorn went out floating towards the deep, and the funeral fire burnt on. Its broad red flame burst forth towards heaven; but when the smoke would have gone upward too, the winds came sobbing and carried it away.

When at last the ship Ringhorn had floated out so far to sea that it looked like a dull, red lamp on the horizon, Frigga turned round and said, "Does any one of you, my children, wish to perform a noble action, and win my love for ever?"

"I do," cried Hermod, before any one else had time to open his lips.

"Go, then, Hermod," answered Frigg, "saddle Sleipnir with all speed, and ride down to Helheim; there seek out Hela, the stern mistress of the dead, and entreat her to send our beloved back to us once more."

Hermod was gone in the twinkling of an eye, and went on his way downwards and downwards till at last he got to Helheim. Sleipner leapt its barred gate, and horse and rider pressed forward through the City of the Dead as far as the Banqueting Hall; there he found Queen Hela, with Baldur and Nanna seated at her side. After supper Hela stalked away, leaving Hermod and Baldur alone, and all that night the two brothers talked together.

The next morning Hermod went to Hela, and

entreated her to let Baldur return to Asgard. He even offered to take his place in Helheim if she pleased ; but Hela only laughed at this, and said, " You talk a great deal about Baldur, and boast how much every one loves him ; I will prove now if what you have told me be true. Let everything on earth, living or dead, weep for Baldur and he shall go home again ; but if *one* thing only refuse to weep, then let Helheim hold its own ; he shall *not* go." to

" Every one will weep willingly," said Hermod, as he mounted Sleipnir, and rode towards the entrance of the city. Baldur went with him as far as the gate, and began to send messages to all his friends in Asgard, but Hermod would not listen to many of them.

" You will so soon come back to us," he said, " there is no use in sending messages."

So Hermod darted homewards, and Baldur watched him through the bars of Helheim's gate-to way as he flew along.

CHAPTER IV.

Hermod's return and the news in Asgard. The Valkyrior go out to the ends of the Earth. "Baldur is dead." A Weeping World. The Witch refuses her tears. Baldur is Hela's prey.

" WELL, Hermod, what did she say ? " asked the *Æsir* from the top of the hill, as they saw him

coming ; "make haste and tell us what she said." And Hermod came up.

"Oh ! is that all ?" they cried, as soon as he had delivered his message. "Nothing can be more easy ;" and then they all hurried off to tell Frigga. She was weeping already, and in five minutes there was not a tearless eye in Asgard.

"But this is not enough," said Odin ; "the whole earth must know of our grief that it may weep with us."

Then the father of the *Æsir* called to him his messenger maidens—the beautiful Valkyrior—and sent them out into all worlds with these three words on their lips, "Baldur is dead !" But the words were so dreadful that at first the messenger maidens could only whisper them in low tones as they went along, "Baldur is dead !" The dull, sad sounds flowed back on Asgard like a new river of grief, and it seemed to the *Æsir* as if they now wept for the first time—"Baldur is dead !"

"What is that the Valkyrior are saying ?" asked the men and women in all the country round, and when they heard rightly, men left their labour and lay down to weep—women dropped the buckets they were carrying to the well, and, leaning their faces over them, filled them with tears. The children crowded upon the doorsteps, or sat down at the corners of the streets, crying as if their own mothers were dead.

The Valkyrior passed on. "Baldur is dead!" they said to the empty fields; and straightway the grass and the wild field-flowers shed tears. "Baldur is dead!" said the messenger maidens to the rocks and the stones; and the very stones began to weep. "Baldur is dead!" the Valkyrior cried; and even the old mammoth's bones, which had lain for centuries under the hills, burst into tears, so that small rivers gushed forth from every mountain's side. "Baldur is dead!" said the messenger maidens as they swept over silent sands; and all the shells wept pearls. "Baldur is dead!" they cried to the sea, and to Jötunheim across the sea; and when the giants understood it, even they wept, whilst the sea rained spray to heaven. After this the Valkyrior stepped from one stone to another until they reached a rock that stood alone in the middle of the sea; then, all together, they bent forward over the edge of it, stooped down and peeped over, that they might tell the monsters of the deep. "Baldur is dead!" they said; and, the sea monsters and the fish wept. Then the messenger maidens looked at one another, and said, "Surely our work is done." So they twined their arms round one another's waists, and set forth on the downward road to Helheim, there to claim Baldur from among the dead.

Now after he had sent forth his messenger maidens, Odin had seated himself on the top of Air Throne that he might see how the earth received his message. At first he watched the

Valkyrior as they stepped forth north and south, and east and west; but soon the whole earth's steaming tears rose up like a great cloud, and hid everything from him. Then he looked down through the cloud, and said, "Are you all weeping?" The Valkyrior heard the sound of his voice as they went all together down the slippery road, and they turned round, stretching out their arms towards Air Throne, their long hair falling back, whilst, with choked voices and streaming eyes, they answered, "The world weeps, Father Odin; the world and we."

After this they went on their way until they came to the end of the cave Gnipa, where Garm was chained, and which yawned over Niflheim. "The world weeps," they said one to another by way of encouragement, for here the road was so dreadful; but just as they were about to pass through the mouth of Gnipa they came upon a haggard witch named Thaukt, who sat in the entrance with her back to them, and her face towards the abyss. "Baldur is dead! Weep, weep!" said the messenger maidens, as they tried to pass her; but Thaukt made answer—

"What she doth hold,
Let Hela keep;
For naught care I,
Though the world weep,
O'er Baldur's bale.
Live he or die
With tearless eye,
Old Thaukt shall wail."

And with these words leaped into Nifheim with a yell of triumph.

"Surely that cry was the cry of Loki," said one of the maidens ; but another pointed towards the city of Helheim, and there they saw the stern face of Hela looking over the wall.

"One has not wept," said the grim Queen, "and Helheim holds its own." So saying she motioned the maidens away with her long, cold hand.

Then the Valkyrior turned and fled up the steep way to the foot of Odin's throne, like a pale snow-drift that flies before the storm.

THE BINDING OF FENRIR.

CHAPTER I.

How the air of Gladsheim works on a wolfish nature. Like Father, like Son. The power of custom. Tyr and Fenrir. Odin's uneasiness. The council of the Æsir. Thor's boast. Læding and Dromi.

I HOPE you have not forgotten what I told you of Fenrir, Loki's fierce wolf-son, whom Odin brought home with him to Asgard, and of whose reformation, uncouth and wolfish as he was, All-Father entertained some hope, thinking that the wholesome, bright air of Gladsheim, the sight of the fair faces of the Asyniur and the hearing of the brave words which day by day fell from the lips of heroes, would, perhaps, have power to change the cruel nature he had inherited from his father, and make him worthy of his place as a dweller in the City of Lords.

To Tyr, the brave and strong-handed, Odin assigned the task of feeding Fenrir, and watching him, lest, in his cruel strength, he should injure any who were unable to defend themselves. And

truly it was a grand sight, and one that Asa Odin loved, to see the two together, when, in the evening after the feast was over in Valhalla, Fenrir came prowling to Tyr's feet to receive his food from the one hand strong enough to quell him.

Tyr stood up in his calm strength like a tall, sheltering rock in which the timid sea-birds find a home; and Fenrir roared and howled round him like the bitter, destroying wave that slowly undermines its base. 10

Time passed on. Tyr had reached the prime of his strength; but Fenrir went on growing, not so rapidly as to awaken fear, as his brother Jörmungand had done, but slowly, surely, continually—a little stronger and a little fiercer every day.

The Æsir and the Asyniur had become accustomed to his presence; the gentlest lady in Asgard no longer turned away from the sight of his fierce mouth and fiery eye; they talked to each other about the smallest things, and every daily event 20 was commented on and wondered about; but no one said anything of Fenrir, or noticed how gradually he grew, or how the glad air and the strong food, which gave valour and strength to an Asa, could only develop with greater rapidity fierceness and cruelty in a wolf. And they would have gone on living securely together while the monster grew and grew, if it had not been that Asa Odin's one eye, enlightened as it was by the upspringing well of wisdom within, saw more clearly than the 30 eyes of his brothers and children.

One evening, as he stood in the court of Valhalla watching Tyr as he gave Fenrir his evening meal, a sudden cloud of care fell on the placid face of All-Father, and when the wolf, having satisfied his hunger, crouched back to his lair, he called together a council of the heads of the *Æsir*—Thor, Tyr, Bragi, Hœnir, Frey, and Niörd; and, after pointing out to them the evil which they had allowed to grow up among them unnoticed, he asked their counsel as to the best way of overcoming it before it became too strong to withstand.

Thor, always ready, was the first to answer. “One would think,” he said, “to hear the grave way in which you speak, Father Odin, that there was no such thing as a smithy near Asgard, or that I, Asa Thor, had no power to forge mighty weapons, and had never made my name known in Jotunheim as the conqueror and binder of 20 monsters. Set your mind at rest. Before to-morrow evening at this time I will have forged a chain with which you shall bind Fenrir; and, once bound in a chain of my workmanship, there will be nothing further to fear from him.”

The assembled *Æsir* applauded Thor’s speech; but the cloud did not pass away from Odin’s brow.

“You have done many mighty deeds, Son Thor,” he said; “but, if I mistake not, this binding of Fenrir will prove a task too difficult even for 30 you.”

Thor made no answer; but he seized Miölnir,



TYR FEEDING FENRIR.

and, with sounding steps, strode to the smithy. All night long the mighty blows of Miölnir rang on the anvil, and the roaring bellows breathed a hot blast over all the hill of Asgard. None of the *Æsir* slept that night; but every now and then one or other of them came to cheer Thor at his work. Sometimes Frey brought his bright face into the dusky smithy; sometimes Tyr entreated permission to strike a stout blow; sometimes Bragi seated himself among the workers, and, with his eyes fixed on the glowing iron, poured forth a hero song, to which the ringing blows kept time.

There was also another guest, who, at intervals, made his presence known. By the light of the fire the evil form of Fenrir was seen prowling round in the darkness, and every now and then a fiendish, mocking laugh filled the pauses of the song, and the wind, and the ringing hammer.

All that night and the next day Thor laboured and Fenrir watched, and, at the time of the evening meal, Thor strode triumphantly into Father Odin's presence, and laid before him Læding, the strongest chain that had ever yet been forged on earth. The *Æsir* passed it from one to another, and wondered at its immense length, and at the ponderous moulding of its twisted links.

"It is impossible for Fenrir to break through this," they said; and they were loud in their thanks to Thor and praises of his prowess; only Father Odin kept a grave, sad silence.

When Fenrir came into the court to receive his food from Tyr, it was agreed that Thor and Tyr were to seize and bind him. They held their weapons in readiness, for they expected a fierce struggle; but, to their surprise, Fenrir quietly allowed the chain to be wound round him, and lay down at his ease, while Thor, with two strokes of Miölnir, rivetted the last link into one of the strongest stones on which the court rested. Then, when the *Æsir* were about to congratulate each other on their victory, he slowly raised his ponderous form, which seemed to dilate in the rising, with one bound forward snapped the chain like a silken thread, and walked leisurely to his lair, as if no unusual thing had befallen him.

The *Æsir*, with downcast faces, stood looking at each other. Once more Thor was the first to speak. "He who breaks through *Læding*," he said, "only brings upon himself the still harder bondage of *Dromi*." And having uttered these words, he again lifted Miölnir from the ground, and, weary as he was, returned to the smithy and resumed his place at the anvil.

For three days and nights Thor worked, and, when he once more appeared before Father Odin, he carried in his hand *Dromi*—the "Strong Binding." This chain exceeded *Læding* in strength by one half, and was so heavy that Asa Thor himself staggered under its weight; and yet Fenrir showed no fear of allowing himself to be bound by it, and it cost him very little more effort than

on the first evening to free himself from its fetters.

After this second failure Odin again called a council of *Æsir* in Gladsheim, to consider what further steps could now be taken to protect Asgard.

CHAPTER II.

A second Council. Frey's advice. The weak things of the Earth. Skirnir's journey into the land of Dwarfs. A Chain like thistledown.

WHEN the *Æsir* were all assembled, the second Council began, Thor standing among the others, silent and shamefaced.

It was now Frey who ventured first to offer an opinion. "Thor, Tyr, and other brave sons of the *Æsir*," he said, "have passed their lives valiantly in fighting against giants and monsters, and, doubtless, much wise lore has come to them through these adventures. I, for the most part, have spent my time peacefully in woods and fields watching how the seasons follow each other, and how the silent, dewy night ever leads up the brightly-smiling day; and, in this watching, many things have been made plain to me which have not, perhaps, been thought worthy of regard by my brother Lords. One thing that I have learned is, the wondrous strength that lies in little things, and that the labour carried on in darkness, and

silence ever brings forth the grandest birth. Thor and Miölnir have failed to forge a chain strong enough to bind Fenrir; but, since we cannot be helped by the mighty and renowned, let us turn to the unknown and weak.

"In the caverns and dim places of the earth live a tiny race of people, who are always working with unwearyed, noiseless fingers. With Asa Odin's permission, I will send my messenger, Skirnir, and entreat aid of them; and we shall, perhaps, find that what passes the might of Asgard may be accomplished in the secret places of Svartheim."

The face of Asa Odin brightened as Frey spoke, and, rising immediately from his seat, he broke up the council, and entreated Frey to lose no time in returning to Alfheim and despatching Skirnir on his mission.

So Frey hurried home, and on his arrival he found that in spite of the cloud that hung over Asgard all was fair and peaceful in Alfheim. But Frey hardly gave himself time to greet Gerd and his elves before he summoned Skirnir into his presence, and acquainted him with the danger that hung over Asgard, and the important mission which the *Æsir* had determined to trust to his sagacity. Skirnir listened, playing with the knot of his wondrous sword, as he was wont to do, in order to make known to every one that he possessed it; for, to confess the truth, it was somewhat too heavy for him to wield.

"This is a far different mission," he said, "from

that on which you once sent me—to woo fairest Gerd ; but, as the welfare of Asgard requires it, I will depart at once, though I have little liking for the dark caves and cunning people."

Frey thanked him, and, putting a small key into his hand, which was, indeed, the key to the gate of Svartheim, he bade him farewell, and Skirmir set out on his journey.

On the way from Alsheim to Svartheim, Skirmir saw many strange sights and countless little dwarfs, 10 hump-backed, cunning-eyed, and open-mouthed, at work in the heart of the earth, amidst masses of gold, rubies, and diamonds. At last he arrived at the dwarfs' brilliantly-lighted palace, and delivered Odin's command. The Dwarf-Chief, seated on a golden throne, promised obedience, but demanded two days in which to perform the task.

At the end of two days Skirmir re-entered the audience-hall, and then the chief of the dwarfs put into his hand a slender chain. You can²⁰ imagine what size it was when I tell you that the dwarf chief held it lightly balanced on his forefinger ; and when it rested on Skirmir's hand it felt to him no heavier than a piece of thistle-down.

The Svart King laughed loud when he saw the disappointment on Skirmir's face. "It seems to you a little thing," he said ; "and yet I assure you that in making it we have used up all the materials in the whole world fit for the purpose.³⁰ No such chain can ever be made again, neither

will the least atom of the substances of which it is made be found more. It is fashioned out of six things. The noise made by the footfall of cats; the beards of women; the roots of stones; the sinews of bears; the breath of fish; and the spittle of birds. Fear not with this to bind Fenrir; for no stronger chain will ever be made till the end of the world."

Skirnir now looked with wonder at his chain, and, after having thanked the dwarfs, and promised to bring them a reward from Odin, he set forth on his road home, and, by the time of the evening meal, reached Valhalla, and gladdened the hearts of the *Æsir* by the tidings of his success.

CHAPTER III.

The Trial on the Island of Sweet Broom. Fenrir's bargain. Gleipnir proves conqueror. Tyr's sacrifice. The verdict of Time. Honour to whom Honour is due.

FAR away to the north of Asgard, surrounded by frowning mountains, the dark lake, Amsvartnir, lies, and, above the level of its troubled waters, burns Lyngvi, the island of sweet broom, flaming like a jewel on the dark brow of Hela. In this lonely isle, to which no ship but Skidbladnir could sail, the *Æsir*, with Fenrir in the midst, assembled to try the strength of the dwarfs' chain.

Fenrir prowled round his old master, Tyr, with a look of savage triumph in his cruel eyes, now licking the hand that had so long fed him, and now shaking his great head, and howling defiantly. The *Æsir* stood at the foot of Giöll, the sounding rock, and passed Gleipnir, the chain, from one to another, talking about it, while Fenrir listened. "It was much stronger than it looked," they said; and Thor and Tyr vied with each other in their efforts to break it; while Bragi declared his belief that there was no one among *Æsir* or giants capable of performing so great a feat, "unless," he added, "it should be you, Fenrir."

This speech roused the pride of Fenrir; and, after looking long at the slender chain and the faces of the *Æsir*, he answered, "Loath am I to be bound by this chain; but, lest you should doubt my courage, I will consent that you should bind me, provided one of you put his hand into my mouth as a pledge that no deceit is intended."²⁰

There was a moment's silence among the *Æsir* when they heard this, and they looked at one another. Odin looked at Thor, and Thor looked at Bragi, and Frey fell behind, and put his hand to his side, where the all-conquering sword, which he alone could wield, no longer rested.

At length Tyr stepped forward valiantly, and put his strong right hand, with which he had so often fed him, into the wolf's cruel jaws.

At this signal the other *Æsir* threw the chain ²¹ round the monster's neck, bound him securely with

one end, and fastened the other to the great rock Giöll. When he was bound Fenrir rose, and shook himself, as he had done before ; but in vain he raised himself up, and bounded forward—the more he struggled the more firmly the slender chain bound him.

At this sight the *Æsir* set up a loud shout of joy ; for they saw their enemy conquered, and the danger that threatened Asgard averted. Only Tyr was silent, for in the struggle he had lost his hand.

Then Thor thrust his sword into the mouth of Fenrir, and a foaming dark flood burst forth, roared down the rock and under the lake, and began its course through the country a turbid river. So it will roll on till Ragnarök be come.

The sails of Skidbladnir now spread themselves out to the wind ; and the *Æsir*, seated in the magic ship, floated over the lake silently in the silent moonlight ; while, from the top of Bifrost, ²⁰ over the Urda fount and the dwelling of the Norns, a song floated down. "Who," asked one voice, "of all the *Æsir* has won the highest honour?" and, singing, another voice made answer, "Tyr has won the highest honour ; for, of all the *Æsir*, he has the most worthily employed his gift."

"Frey gave his sword for fairest Gerd."

"Odin bought for himself wisdom at the price of his right eye."

"Tyr, not for himself, but for others, has sacrificed ³⁰ his strong right hand."

GLOSSARY OF HARDER WORDS.

1. The first number tells you what page to look for; the second number what line on that page.
2. The meaning given for each word is the meaning it bears on the page set down. You must remember that in another sentence it might have rather a different meaning. Where more than one explanation is given, the first is the simplest.
3. * An asterisk means that the word is old-fashioned and chiefly used in poetry.

abyss (6. 10), bottomless pit.

achievement (34. 15), a great deed.

soquit oneself (20. 31), bear oneself.

anvil (97. 3), iron block on which a blacksmith hammers.

applaud (98. 25), praise.

assemble (7. 4), come together.

assuredly (8. 27), certainly.

attribute (66. 15), consider as belonging.

avert (194. 9), turn away.

* **bale** (92. 29), destruction, ruin.

barren (15. 1), unfruitful (of land where nothing will grow).

blemished (10. 19), damaged.

bountifully (58. 2), plentifully.

bulk (60. 19), size, mass.

casket (56. 1), box, case.

cauldron (5. 14), a large metal pot.

challenge (12. heading), to call out to fight.

cleft (24. 1), past tense of cleave, to cut.

comment on (95. 21), remark on.

comply with (58. 23), agree with.

comport oneself (58. 12), behave.

congratulate (98. 10), to rejoice with another over a happy event.

contriver (8. 1), plotter; compare 40. 12, where contrived means managed.

coronet (46. 13), wreath.

couched (in words) (70. 2), expressed.

cumbersome (12. 4), heavy and awkward, unwieldy.

decree (89. 18), give a royal command.

dale (78. 24), pass between hills, narrow valley.

desperately (32. 18), hopelessly; compare 47. 20, where "desperate resolution" is the resolution arising from despair.

dilate (98. 12), to swell.

diminished (24. 10), made less.

disastrous (61. 14), harmful, unlucky.

distinguish (45. 24), make out, see separately from other things.

drain (20. 7), drink up, empty.

draught (20. 8), a gulp.

enlightened (95. 29), having light or knowledge.

entice (55. 10), tempt.

exalt (2. 18), lift.

exhausted (53. 5), worn out, drained of strength.

expanded (76. 2), spread out.

exquisitely (46. 27), with perfect art.

exulting (46. 18), joyful and triumphant.

* fare (11. 12), go.

fathomless (4. 4), bottomless.

feat (19. 27), deed.

ferocious (8. 8), fierce.

foreboding (65. 13), foretelling evil.

fortify (56. 22), strengthen.

friction (8. 24), rubbing.

gesture (86. 10), a movement shewing feeling.

horizon (25. 15), the line where earth and sky meet.

hospitable (29. 1), kind to guests.

immortal (47. 7), undying.

indifferent (63. 9), not caring.

inspire (2. 18), to breathe into.

loathe (102. 16), unwilling.

lowering (57. 29), threatening, gloomy.

majestic (60. 4), kingly.

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mead (27. 13, and often), a drink like sweet wine, honey-wine. The mead kettle in line 15 on this same page, was a great jar that they passed down the table.

meditative (7. 6), thoughtful.

mission (37. 4), the errand on which one is sent.

mortified (22. 29), hurt in one's pride.

musning (42. 1), thinking.

mysterious (3. 6), having a veiled meaning, hidden from our understanding.

myrtle (70. 8), difficult to understand (see mysterious).

oblivion (10. 4), forgetfulness.

oppressor (3. 9), a man who wrongs weaker people.

oracle (70. heading), the answer of a god to some question. These answers were generally hard to understand.

peccance (20. 6), punishment.

parade (75. 8), go through, spread over.

petrify (34. 13), turn to stone.

placid (86. 3), calm.

ponderous (29. 25), heavy.

presume (80. 21), make bold.

prowess (24. 13), bravery.

puny (1. 8), (20. 13), small and feeble.

pursue (18. 12), follow.

pyre (86. 22), fire to burn the dead, commonly made of a pile of wood.

quell (96. 3), keep under, subdue.

rampart (74. 12), wall of defence.

ransom (75, heading), price of a prisoner's freedom.

ravine (24. 1), a deep cutting or gorge in the hills.

recess (55. 31), a private place within, retreat.

reformation (94. 4), a change from bad ways to good.

reluctant (10. 7), unwilling.

remorseless (3. 28), pitiless.

renowned (100. 3), famous.

resound (29. 10), give back a sound, echo.

reveal (70. 3), bring to light.

revival (69. 16), coming back to life.

* **rimy** (87. 17), frosty.

rivet (98. 8), fasten with a metal pin.

runes (14. 2, and often), secret signs, a picture alphabet (used to work magic). For instance  represents the letter Y and means Misery :  is F and means Fee or Money.

sacred (6. 30), holy.

saga (38. 6), a hero story of olden time, a tale often told.

sagacity (100. 25), cleverness.

serene (49. 20), unclouded.

solitary (57. 15), lonely.

sombre (77. 14), dark.

sorrow-stricken (47. 19), struck or bowed down by sorrow.

spacious (15. 9), roomy, large.

spectre (5. 7), ghost, spirit.

steadfastly (61. 10), without moving, steadily.

stealthy (38. 29, compare 1. 20), secret, like a thief.

substance (102. 1), that of which a thing is made, stuff.

sumptuously (63. 23), splendidly.

sway (16. 7), move, wave.

tour (57. 10), expedition, trip.

traverse (15. 6), cross.

treacherous (70. 4), tricky, faithless.

turbid (104. 14), troubled, muddy.

un-, prefix meaning "not."

* unsmooth (16. 6), awkward, ungainly; compare 17. 29.

uninhabited (3. 14), not lived in.

* unscathed (81. heading), unhurt.

untinged (82. 23), unstained.

vapour (9. 18), mist.

vaulted (46. 7), arched.

venomous (31. 23, compare 1. 28), poisonous; venom in 1. 28 of this page is the poison of serpents and other animals.

verdant (24. 2), green and growing.

vie with each other (103. 9), see who can do a thing best, compete.

vigorous (56. 16), full of life and strength.

voracious (79. 3), eager to devour.

wallet (17. 24), bag.

warrant (68. 13), right, authority.

wistfully (46. 31), longingly, with anxious inquiry.

woof (10. 20), in weaving, the threads that run lengthwise in the loom are called the warp: those that cross them are called the woof.

NOTES.

P. 2, l. 25. Odin "told them of his great fight with the giant of long ago." This was Ymir, the first giant, who was killed by Odin. See Introduction.

P. 29, l. 14. "A hard frozen wood stood upon his cheek." This is the expression used in the *Edda* lay itself (Hymir's lay), where the figure "an ice-bound forest" is used. It brings a vivid picture before the eye of the frozen beard and hair of the giant set as fast with icicles as forest trees. (See Gering's translation of the *Edda*, p. 25.)

P. 38, l. 24. Thor "placed (the kettle) on his head, while the rings rang at his feet." The rings form the handles of the pot—probably a number of iron links made into a chain and fastened by rings to the sides of the pot. By this chain it could hang. When the kettle is on Thor's head, the chain would drop from its sides and, being very long, clink against his heels.

P. 39, l. 25. "You shall live alone on the Eagle Mount turned towards Hel." The expression Eagle Mount is a literal translation from another of the *Edda* lays ("Skirnir's lay"). It most likely means a mountain at the edge of heaven, where a fierce wind-giant called Hireswieg (Body Swallower) sits in the shape of an eagle. When he flaps his wings, storms rage. Here is the end of the world and the mouth of Hell. (See Gering, p. 56, and see p. 65.)

P. 81, l. 2. "No man shall waken me again until Loki have burst his chain." This is a prophecy on the part of the Vala, Loki is not yet bound, though soon the *Aair* will punish his treachery by chaining him to a rock. At Ragnarok he will break free. See Glossary and Introduction.

P. 87, l. 10. "Thought and Memory sang one sad song that day." Hugin and Munin are the names of Odin's two ravens. Hugin means "Thought" and Munin "Memory." Every day at dawn Odin sends them forth over the earth; at mid-day they return, sit on his shoulder and whisper all they have heard and seen into his ear. (See Gering's *Edda*, pp. 73 and 330.)

Bragi (54). The never-failing singer and story-teller of the Gods. He was Odin's son and Iduna's husband; son of Poetic Inspiration and husband of Eternal Youth. His name means *poetry*.

Brisingamen (45-53). Freyja's necklace.

Broadblink. Baldur's palace. A translation of the Icelandic word Breiðablik, which means *gleaming far and wide*.

Brunnir (39, 42, 87). Odin's magic ring, made for him by the dwarfs. With this ring Frey weds Gerda. It is laid by Odin on Baldur's pile. Every ninth night it drops eight golden rings as beautiful as itself. Hence its name, which means *the dropper*.

Dromi (98). Fenrir's second chain.

Ellewoman. See page 71.

Eli (22, 24). Old Age, who wrestles with Thor in the form of an old woman.

Eri. A river. See page 8.

Fenrir (6, 94-104). The monstrous wolf, Loki's son who at the end of the world is to vanquish Odin, and then fall himself.

Folkvang. See page 44. The word means *Field of folk-gathering*.

Frey (35-43, 99, 100). Son of Niörd, one of the race of Gods called *Vana*. He is Lord of Rain and Sunshine and God of the Spring.

Freyja (41, 44-53, 70). Daughter of Niörd, the Van, and sister of Frey. Like her brother, she sends the soft spring rain and brings forth flowers and fruit upon the earth.

Frigga or Frigg (2, 76, 77, 83-85, 87, 88). The wife of Odin, and chief of the goddesses of Valhalla. She is the giver of wedded happiness and home joys. Her name means *the Beloved, the Wife*.

Garm (79, 92). The fierce watch-dog of hell. The name means *the Bellower*.

Gerda or Gerd (36, 38-43). A giant maiden, daughter of Gymir, wooed by Frey.

Giallar-horn. See page 6.

Ginnungagap. See Introduction. The chasm or nothingness out of which the world sprang.

Göll (103-104). A rock.

Gladabheim (7). Means *world of gladness*.

Gleipnir (103). The third chain which held Fenrir bound.

Gnipa (78, 92). The dark cave leading to Nifheim.

Gymir (37). A frost giant and the father of Gerda. The name means *the wintery one*.

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Heimdall (6, 8, 10). The watchman of the gods. He has to blow the Giallar horn at the approach of danger to Asgard.

Hela (6, 68, 69). Loki's daughter. Queen of the Dead.

Helheim (6). The city of Hela in the land of Niflheim. Baldur is found in Helheim after death. Here it was believed all the dead not slain in battle had to come.

Hermod (81, 88, 89). Odin's swift messenger and one of his many sons. He journeys to hell to seek Baldur.

Hödur. Slayer of Baldur. See pages 84, 85.

Hœmir. See page 57.

Evergalnir (5). The whirlpool of Niflheim, which rises below Yggdrasil's lowest root, and from which all rivers of hell spring. The word means *surging waters of the pit*.

Hymir (27). The giant of the frozen Sea, from whom Tyr fetches the cauldron, Mile-deep. The word means *the dark one*, picturing the gloom of the northern wintry seas.

Hyrroklin. A giantess. See page 87.

Iðunn or Idun (39, 54-58, 61-74). Goddess of Youth. Guardian of the apples that keep the gods ever young. Bragi, the bard, is her husband.

Jörmungand (6, 27, 31). The great Sea-serpent, son of Loki, whose anger causes storms at sea.

Jötunheim (1, 2, 12, 65, and often). World of the giants in the icy North.

Krunt. A river. See page 8.

Leeding (98). The first chain made to bind Fenrir.

Loki (5, 81, and often). Author of evil among gods and men. He is the father of all destructive powers: of Fenrir in the upper world, Hela in the under world, and Jörmungand in the sea. The name means the *Ender*. See Introduction.

Lyngvi. An island. See page 102.

Manheda (14). The world of men.

Midgard (6). The earth or home of men. It is the middle portion of the world, enclosed by the circles of sea and giantland. See Diagram.

Mimer (3). A giant, guardian of the Well of Wisdom. See Introduction.

Mjölmir (13). Thor's wonderful hammer, which never misses its aim, and always returns to the hand of its master. It signifies the lightning. The word means the *Crusher*.

Manna (87). Baldur's wife.

Naskrind. In Niflheim. See page 5.

Nidhögg (5). The Dragon who gnaws the root of the World-Ash. The word means *cruel biter*.

Nifhheim (5). The dark underworld of the dead. Dreadful rivers flow through it, and monsters like Nidhögg inhabit it. The name means *Fog-world*.

Njörd (36, 41, 96). A Van, the kindly god of seafaring. He was prayed to by sailors for calm weather, favourable winds, and good harbourage. The word means *the Benefactor*.

Norns (6, 10, 11, 70) or **Noruzir** (11). Three strong giant-maidens representing Fate. They control the destinies of the gods as well as of man. Their home lies in the clouds above the rainbow, by Urd's fountain, where they spin the threads of Fate. See Introduction.

Odin (1, and often). The Sky-God, ruler of Asgard. Visits men, 2. Drinks Wisdom, 3. Gazes into Nifhheim, 4. Goes to Jötunheim, 5. Sees Heimdall, 6. Takes the *Aess* to the Norns, 7-11. At Frey's wedding, 43. Consents to Freyja's journey, 47. Journeys with Loki and Hoenir, 58-61. Reads the oracle, 70. Goes to inquire of the Valkyrior, 78-81. At Baldr's funeral with his ravens, 87. Sends forth his Valkyrior, 90. Foresees danger from Fearnir and calls a council, 96. See Introduction.

Odur (44). Freyja's husband.

Ragnarök (81, 104). That dreaded day often called the Twilight of the Gods, when confusion and ruin fall upon the world, and the *Aessir* are vanquished for a time by the giant powers of evil. The word means *doom of the Gods*. See Introduction.

Ran (51, 53). Wife of Ægir, and Queen of the drowned. Ran represents the sea in its cruel aspect, while Ægir is the peaceful ocean. Her name means *robbery*.

Binghorn (87). Baldur's ship which became his pyre.

Roska. See page 13. The name means *sister*.

Ryme (36, 39). A Frost-giant. The word rime is still used for hoar-frost. Compare 'rimy,' 87.

Sæhrimnir (7). The bear of Valhalla.

Sifofna (53). Daughter of Freyja and goddess of sleep.

Siddbladnir (43, 75, 102, 104). A magic ship made by the dwarfs and given by Odin to Frey at his wedding. It is supposed to be a cloud.

Skrirnir (36, 41, 100). Frey's messenger.

Skyrmir (16). The mountain giant who deceives Thor. His name means *the Juggler*.

Skuld (10, 11). One of the three Fates—the Future. See *Norns*.

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Elmimir (78). Odin's eight-footed grey horse. The name means *the swift one*.

Ervathain (45). The Dark World where the dwarfs live.

Thaukt. A witch. See page 92.

Thialf. See page 13. The name means *brother*.

Thiassi. A giant. See page 60.

Thor (1, and often). God of thunder, son of Odin, called the Friend of men. He is too heavy for Bifrost, 8. His adventures in Jötunheim, 12-18. His three feasts in Uigard's Palace, 19-25. At Ægir's banquet, 25-27. He fetches Mile-deep, 28-34. Makes chains to bind Fenrir, 96. See Introduction.

Tyr (27, 28, 94, 103, 104). Son of Odin and one of the chief of the *Æsir*. God of war and strength. He loses his right hand in fight with Fenrir.

Urd (10, 11). One of the Fates—called the Past. See *Norns*. The well of Urd(s) (6, 8, 10, 69) is the sacred fountain of the Norns at the root of the World-Ash. From this source all rivers spring.

Uigard (18). The land of giants, the outer ice-bound circle beyond those of Midgard and the sea. The word means *outer enclosure*. See Diagram. (On page 20 the name of the land is transferred to the king of the land.)

Vala (78). Wise woman, prophetess whom Odin consults about Baldur's dream.

Valhalla (6, 61, and elsewhere). The great Hall of Asgard with 540 doors, where the fallen heroes, the "chosen slain," feast and fight. The word is also used to mean the abode of the gods in general. See *Valkyrior* and Introduction.

Valkyrior (90). Valkyries, Odin's warrior-maidens who choose out the heroes slain in battle and take them to Valhalla. Odin decides which warriors are to come to him. The word means *choosers of the slain*.

Van, plural Vanir (6, 33). The gods of air and water, friendly to the *Æsir* and even living with them in Asgard. See Introduction.

Vanna (44). Feminine of Van.

Vegtam (79). Odin calls himself Vegtam, the son of Valtam, when he goes to inquire of the dead prophetess concerning Baldur. In his travels Odin was wont to assume various disguises. The word Vegtam means *wayfarer*, and the word Valtam *fighting man*. Both names are invented by Odin to disguise his personality.

Verdandi (10, 11). One of the three Fates—the Present. See *Norns*.

Ving-Thor (17, 20). One of the names descriptive of Thor. It means, *Thor the Hurler*, viz., of the thunder-bolt.

Yggdrasill (4, 10, and elsewhere). The world-ash. It has three roots, one in Niflheim, one with the Norns, and the third in Giant-land. See Diagram and Introduction.

Ymir. Note 1. The first giant from whose body the Gods made the earth. See Introduction.

QUESTIONS.

1. Give in your own words Odin's teaching to men.
2. How did Odin get Wisdom?
3. Draw a picture of Jörmungand after Odin had thrown him into the sea and of what Odin saw when he came to the heavenly hills (p. 6); *Or*,
Draw a picture of all the *Æsir* saw when they got inside "the door of the pale bright cloud" (pp. 9 and 10).
4. What did the *Æsir* learn from the Norns? Give their names and meanings.
5. Shew by a diagram the positions of Asgard and Jötunheim.
6. What sort of giants were Skrymir and Hymir? Describe the appearance of each of them.
7. Tell how Thor went fishing.
8. How did Skirnir try to persuade Gerda to go with him?
9. Describe the little people of Alsheim and Svartheim.
10. Why did the heroes of Asgard call upon Iduna every day?
11. What do we mean by a myth?
12. Give some idea of the beginning and end of the world as pictured by the Northmen.
13. Describe the following characters and the part they play in this book: Frey, Ægir, Bragi, Hermod, Odur, Thialfi, Ran, Thiaasi.
14. What do you know about Brisingamen, Skidbladnir, Draupnir, Yggdrasil, Sehrimnir, Garm and Miölnir?
15. Give the meaning of the following words: Asgard, Niflheim, Bifrost, Sleipnir, Valkyrior, Nidhögg, Gladheim and Wednesday.
16. Make sentences bringing in each of the following words: fare, bale, distinguish, draught, contrive, ravine, quell, dilate, gesture, puny; challenge, mysterious.

17. Give another word to express each of the following: sturdy, toil, instruct, remorseless, reluctant, conquer, expensive, vie.
18. What are the adjectives corresponding to the following nouns, and what do the words mean?—treachery, venom, ferocity, trembling, encumbrance, uncouthness, hospitality, desperation, serenity, solitude, bounty, indifference, foreboding, meditation.

SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS.

1. Character of Odin.
2. The uses of travelling.
3. Thor's adventures in the Palace of Utgard.
4. What sort of hero was Thor? Was he like Odin?
5. Show from the story of Baldur's death why Loki is thus addressed in Matthew Arnold's poem?
"Deceiver, fair in form but false in heart,
Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate."
6. What do you mean by a Hero?
7. Odin's journey into Helheim.
8. Where do the stories in this book come from? Say all you know about this subject.
9. Which of the *Æsir* do you admire most and why?
10. Tell the whole story of Fenrir.
11. An imaginary journey to Jötunheim.
12. The Northmen.

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY.

1. In Paul's "Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie":—Mögk's two articles on (a) "Mythologie," Vol. III., pp. 230-406, (b) "Norwegisch-isländische Literatur," Vol. II., pp. 555-922. [Also published separately.] (Strasburg, 1898.)
2. Kaufmann's "Northern Mythology," translated into English by M. Steele Smith in Dent's Primers.
3. Gering's "Edda." (Leipzig, 1892.)
4. Vigfusson and Powell, "Corpus Poeticum Boreale" (Vol. I.).
5. Thorpe's "Elder Edda."
6. Gray's poems, "The Fatal Sisters" and "The Descent of Odin."
7. Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero-worship"—"Odin."
8. Longfellow's poems, "Tegner's Drapa" and "The Challenge of Thor" from "Tales of a Wayside Inn."
9. Matthew Arnold's poem, "Baldur Dead."
10. Felix Dahn—"Odin's Trout."

1. Mögk's two articles embody the latest results of scholarly research on Northern Mythology and Literature. Their length and erudition, however, make them unsuitable for the general reader, and they are included in our list chiefly as authorities and works of reference.

2. Miss Steele Smith's translation of Professor Kaempfner's little book is a useful outline of Northern Mythology. It deals shortly and concisely with the chief Edda myths, their origin, meaning and growth, and is a book all students can make time to read.

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